development forum

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No more business as usual

Nobel laureates tell us that current emphasis on economic growth is a dead-end street.

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Richard B. Mock

In this issue:

Iron Curtain unveils Europe's common ground

UNCTAD reviews its role

Dress rehearsal for Earth Summit

development forum

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Sustainable Development

No more business as usual

When the Brundtland Report, Our Common Future, *was released five years ago, the concept of "sustainable development", sanctioned by consensus among a remarkable group of international leaders, became the cornerstone of a new international environment and development movement, and certainly was a central inspiration for the upcoming Earth Summit.*

Today, a group of influential economists is calling for major revisions in that thinking, arguing that the level of global economic growth it recommends is simply not possible, that the limits to growth have already been reached.

In their book recently published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), entitled *Environmentally Sustainable Economic Development: Building on Brundtland*, Nobel laureates Trygve Haavelmo and Jan Tinbergen and World Bank economists Robert Goodland and Herman Daly and others, while hoping to bolster Brundtland's call for a rapid transition to sustainability, warn that economic activity can no longer proceed under the banner of "business as usual", arguing that it is no longer tenable to make economic growth the unquestioned objective of economic development policy. The argument has serious implications regarding the urgent political decisions needed to change current social, economic and environmental policies.

The traditional concept of growth, which the authors call "throughput growth", with its reliance on an ever-increasing throughput of energy and other natural materials, cannot be sustained and must yield to an imaginative pursuit of economic ends that are less resource-intensive.

The way economic planners undervalue natural capital services and fail to account for natural asset degradation often means that we are actually impoverishing ourselves while imagining that our economies are growing. The authors argue that the new approach requires a concerted effort at remoulding consumers' preferences and steering social wants in the direction of environmentally benign activities, while simultaneously reducing throughput per unit of final product, including services.

Earlier studies, they say, of environmental limits to growth, emphasized the source limits (depletion of petroleum, copper, etc.). Experience has shown, however, that the "sink" constraints (greenhouse effect, ozone depletion, local air and water pollution, etc.) are the more pressing problems.

Growth vs. development

Brundtland's laudable call for sustainable development, according to the economists, has elicited two opposing

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Environment

Iron Curtain unveils common ground

By Fred Pearce

The fall of Eastern Europe's Iron Curtain has revealed some appalling ecological damage, but it has unveiled some startling ecological gems as well. As the barbed wire fences and sentry towers are dismantled along the no man's lands that marked key cold war border areas, pristine tracts of land, untouched by people for decades, are suddenly accessible again, revealing a wealth of biodiversity increasingly rare in this crowded continent. Conservationists and the United Nations have joined forces to turn these unique biospheres into the ecological building blocks for a new, environmentally aware Europe.

When access to these forbidden areas was first permitted two years ago, environmentalist Hans Langer, a retired German businessman, realized that the vulnerable tracts of land extending across Europe could be valuable building blocks in a conservation effort that would also serve to unite the long separated populations on both sides of the old border areas.

His plan has become an international conservation project, known as Ecological Bricks, that is now receiving backing from governments in the East and the West and funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), recently set up at the World Bank with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (*see related stories on page 3*).

The modest reserves comprise some of Europe's most scenic and diverse lands, ranging from the flower-covered Rhodope

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Impact Visuals/Michael Paugaard

***While many border** areas became no man's lands, others remained untouched for decades.*

Trade and Development

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UNCTAD at a crossroads

Cartagena de Indias, Colombia—As the world community attempts to define and adjust to a new world order, there was broad agreement among both developed and developing countries on the need to rethink the role of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) at its conference here during February.

When UNCTAD VIII completed its three-week meeting, the 125 nations participating managed to achieve some agreements on a revised work plan despite widely divergent views as to what its economic priorities should be over the next four years.

According to UNCTAD secretary-general Kenneth K.S. Dadzie, the conference "had developed common approaches to the themes that would be at the heart of the international economic agenda in the 1990s." He cited the discussions on good management, privatization and the process of transition to market economies, conversion of military capacities to peaceful uses and sustainable development as the conference's major breakthroughs.

It was agreed that UNCTAD should continue to be the focal point in the United Nations for the integrated treatment of development and related issues in the areas of trade, finance, investment, services and technology. As such its functions should continue to include the overall process of policy analysis, intergovernmental deliberation, consensus-building and negotiation, monitoring, implementation and follow-up and technical co-operation on these areas.

Such a role was in question prior to the meeting. Since its inception in 1964, UNCTAD has been the main instrument of the United Nations General Assembly for negotiating issues of trade and international co-operation for development. It has also been a forum for the North/South dialogue on economic issues, which has come to a virtual standstill in recent years.

Partly because of its universal membership, UNCTAD has played the role of international trade and development watchdog for developing countries.

As former communist countries join other international bodies, and disunity increases in Third World positions on many issues, however, the North has openly wondered if UNCTAD has now

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Letters

Birth traditions

Dear Editor,

I am in the process of setting up a Birth Traditions Survival Bank which will be a database of information about birth traditions worldwide. I want to contact people who may be interested and am particularly keen on finding individuals who, either through personal experience or their professional work, come in contact with birth traditions and could send me details about them for the bank.

UNICEF/Wyatt

The aim of the bank is to bring together existing information about birth traditions as well as to carry out research on traditions which would otherwise be forgotten and lost forever.

An important subsidiary aim is to make the data accessible to everyone—from the pregnant woman wanting to know about her own traditions to the politician wanting to integrate traditional practitioners into a woman-centred health service for women and children.

Eventually the collection will also include a photographic library, literary and artistic works as well as new empirical data collected specifically for the bank.

I ask that *Development Forum* readers pass on details to those who might be interested. Anyone who would like further information could contact me.

Thank you very much indeed for your help.

Jacky Vincent Priya,
The Birth Traditions Survival Bank, Private Bag 2, Mtunthama, Malawi, Central Africa.

Lessen adverse effects of free trade

Dear Editor,

One outstanding outcry of most developing countries today is what they refer to as the unjust international economic order, which is the outcome of the ever-expanding free market system. Their main complaint is that they are not receiving fair prices for their commodities, while they have to pay relatively very high prices for imported goods from developed countries; and this is because the developed countries being in a stronger position are able to determine the terms of the trade in their favour.

How can the world guarantee the survival and growth of the developing countries and also the continued prosperity of the developed nations, while at the same time maintaining the main ingredients of free trade? I would like to propose that every country take stock of its position at the end of the day, and those who made more gains be made to provide assistance to those who made less.

Although international trade is not a zero-sum game in which one nation's gain is another's loss, some nations certainly always gain more than others.

I believe that assistance should be made available to countries that are at a disadvantage as a result of inequity in free trade and international policy, on the basis of comprehensive technical criteria or regulations adopted and complied with by all nations.

The functions of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) could be expanded to cover the policy requirements needed to bring into effect these new regulations.

It might be argued that such assistance should remain an ethical or political decision, best left to each country to determine. But if this is the way to bring more equity into international business, then it becomes necessary to institutionalize it internationally as an aspect of the new world order.

Stephen E.K. Loh,
senior manager, National Investment Bank, Accra, Ghana.

Robin Jareaux

Logic of no growth

Dear Editor,

I recently read the excellent article "Sustainable development is possible only if we forgo growth" by Herman E. Daly (*DF*, September-October 1991).

One of the deep roots of our current crisis is that mankind, which has been so successful in science and technology, has entirely failed to develop ethics to guide us in using our powerful tools in a careful and moderate way as to avoid damage to our planet earth.

An elementary condition for a sustainable economy is that the matter processed has to be negligibly small in comparison with the matter of the ecosystem. Almost everybody disregards this rule.

Thus, up to now, few people realize how narrow the scope for economic growth on our planet is, especially those who call for ever-accelerating economic growth. Let us consider the exponential multiplication of a grain of rice by a factor of 100. The result, which is really hard to imagine, is a mass of grain roughly 10 times that of our earth.

Clearly, nothing in our economy can multiply exponentially 100 times, simply because of the smallness of our earth. The accelerating extinction of species of plants and animals, as well as the increasing worldwide contamination, clearly show that we have thoughtlessly overstepped critical bounds. Too many multiplications of our economy have already taken place.

Rather than putting the power of our computers to accelerate growth, it is clearly time to concentrate our efforts on stopping economic growth immediately. The goal of economy must by no means be to grow, but, first of all, to cover the elementary, sustainable needs of mankind.

Heinrich Noller,
Bauernfeldg. 7/1, A-1190 Vienna, Austria.

Beating swords . . . into civic action

Dear Editor,

What does one do with all the armies which no longer threaten one another, and, if allowed to sit around doing nothing, will ultimately get into trouble? You put them to work! You send their soldiers out to construct roads, plant trees, clean up rivers, stop deserts from encroaching on villages, and yes, you even use the troops to organize and support young people to do such things themselves. You use military forces to carry out such civic action programmes at home, and you also send them overseas to carry out such vital tasks in the world's underdeveloped nations.

One of the successful precedents for such military-run civil development activities was in the 1930s when the United States was in the midst of a great economic depression. On an emergency basis, the United States army was called in to run a massive civic action programme to create thousands of jobs instantly for poor, unemployed young people, and at the same time try and conserve and also regenerate the country's then badly managed natural resources.

Considering the staggering dimensions of our planet's current environmental problems, not to speak of the urgent need—wherever possible—to replenish our rapidly diminishing natural resources due to surging population growth, it would be naïve to think that such gargantuan tasks can be assumed by well-meaning, but largely ineffective volunteer groups. Nothing less than a massive, well-co-ordinated series of national and regional campaigns, of the sort that only the military authorities are capable of mounting and sustaining, is really adequate to meet such critical challenges.

But, what is likely to be the single most important contribution of the military in helping to put our planet in order is the key role it can play in organizing, motivating and supporting the activities of young people in many countries to carry out the multitude of tasks linked with such civic-action work projects.

David Dichter,
director, Technology for the People, P.O. Box 2253, 1211 Geneva 1, Switzerland.

Worldwatch/Robert Soulé

IN OUR HANDS
EARTH SUMMIT '92

Causes vs. symptoms

Dear Editor,

I thank you for your extensive coverage of the upcoming Earth Summit. I hope that without much haggling some consensus on solving the problems connected with environment and development will be achieved. Treaties and protocols, however good they are, are not solutions.

People, of course, are the real and basic causes of our development and environmental problems: our freedom to work or not to work; to amass wealth in whatever way we like; to eat, drink and be merry; to have as many children as we wish; to be concerned or not concerned about what happens to our neighbours. Whatever governments and social institutions do to moderate our choices, people everywhere tend to try to ignore restrictions to these "freedoms".

Governments have to legislate regulations. But they and all others in authority, from top to bottom, have to practice what they legislate. The majority of people have to be led by example. The leaders of social institutions, the family, schools, religious organizations and in the media have to educate and help those under their influence to restrict their freedoms and be concerned not only of themselves, but others too.

V.T. George,
Nallanikunnu, UC College, Alwaye-683102, South India.

Global Environment Facility makes its debut

By Mohamed T. El-Ashry

In late 1990 the international community took unprecedented action to tackle global environmental problems by setting up the Global Environment Facility (GEF). It was unprecedented because GEF was

expressly intended as a partnership between industrial and developing countries and between several international agencies to help developing countries deal with a range of global environmental issues. Industrial countries recognized that it was in their own interest to help developing countries avoid the patterns of environmentally degrading growth which industrial countries themselves had followed in the past. As such, the facility may be the beginning of a new kind of global endeavour for sustainable development.

But GEF is already no stranger to controversy. Some observers see it as the handmaiden to a new international environmental order which recognizes the mutual dependency of development and environmental protection. Others see GEF as hiding the true culprits of global destruction—the industrialized countries—while diverting resources from development priorities. Questions have also been raised about the structure and governance of GEF.

What is GEF? How does it work? What does it do? What is its future?

GEF is a pilot programme with about $1 billion to spend in developing countries for investment projects and technical assistance to protect the global environment and transfer environmentally-benign technologies. GEF funds are additional to regular development assistance and are grants.

A guiding principle has been to make GEF membership and participation in it open to as many countries as possible. The funds are provided mainly by industrial country members. But any country can become a participant for a minimum contribution of about $5.5 million. About 30 countries, half from the developing world, have joined so far.

Co-operation between international agencies without creating additional bureaucracy is another guiding principle. GEF is overseen jointly by the World Bank, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Development Programme. These agencies have set up small units to manage the facility, but overhead has been kept to a modest 4 per cent of spending.

By pooling their experience and expertise, the agencies have much more impact collectively than they would individually. Although the World Bank administers the facility and manages the investment projects that will account for about 70 per cent of GEF's spending during the pilot phase, the close relationship between the agencies has forged a common sense of stewardship that has allayed fears of an imbalance of power among the troika.

Projects can be proposed by governments, GEF implementing agencies, and non-governmental organizations. A panel of 16 independent scientific advisers has broken new ground in ensuring the scientific integrity of GEF activities by setting criteria and priorities for project selection. To the great credit of all participants, more than 50 projects worth some $450 million have been presented and six had been approved by early February.

Voices for Development

A new phase of international co-operation around environmental issues has been inaugurated with the establishment of mechanisms such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Mohamed T. El-Ashry, chairman of GEF, explains the special role of the facility. William Pace, co-chair of the International NGO Task Group on Legal and Institutional Matters for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, expresses some of the concerns of developing countries and non-governmental organizations regarding GEF.

There is growing consensus that GEF should be the conduit for financing the conventions on climate change and biodiversity which are now in the final stages of negotiation.

Pilot phase

For the pilot phase the focus is on global warming, ozone depletion, biological diversity, and the protection of international waters—all problems for which the industrialized world bears historic responsibility but which will grow with population pressures, urbanization and industrialization in the developing world.

The list of problems covered by GEF is not exhaustive. Indeed, one lesson from GEF's young life is that environmental problems often spread across a continuum of local, national, regional and global levels. Thus several countries—developed and developing—have called for GEF funds to deal with national environmental problems, such as lack of clean water, or regional blights, such as desertification.

Those and similar needs are certainly acute. The best response, however, is probably to provide assistance through existing bilateral and multilateral development programmes.

But GEF's participating governments agree that it must support beneficiaries' national environmental priorities. These are, or should be, inextricable from their developmental goals. The link with the global level is national environmental action plans which place countries' priorities within wider contexts. In this way, GEF can meet local needs while promoting global environmental protection.

This question of coverage is part of the discussion on the transition from the pilot project to GEF II. Other issues include the connection between the facility and future global environmental conventions, the status of participants, and the way decisions are taken.

Financing new conventions?

In the run-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), there is growing consensus that GEF should be the conduit for financing the conventions on climate change and biodiversity, which are now in the final stages of negotiation, and other agreements which could emerge (for example, on forests). Providing finance would help developing countries meet their global commitments under the conventions.

But a good deal more work is needed to determine how the conventions would tie into the facility. A central issue is to avoid loopholes through which GEF might fund projects in countries that have not signed, or are not in conformity with, the conventions.

Participating governments are also taking a close look at their own role. There is a growing sense that broader representation would improve their effectiveness. One suggestion is to lower the $5.5 million entry fee for developing countries while introducing a formula for other contributors that reflects their ability to pay.

Any changes in GEF's mandate must retain its democratic functions. Countries must have a say in decision-making without crippling the facility with micro-management and constant ballots. Most governments agree that the best approach is a consensual one, with recourse to some form of majority voting only as a last resort. If all these thoughts become reality, GEF will be a new model for promoting closer international co-operation, more effective global environmental protection, and sustainable development. ■

Mohamed T. El-Ashry is director of environment at the World Bank and chairman of GEF. His responsibilities for GEF include representing the facility, assisting the implementing agencies fulfil their roles, and building consensus among participating governments on policy and strategic issues.

GEF has a lot to prove

By William R. Pace

The Global Environment Facility, like the upcoming Earth Summit, has emerged from the

shared recognition that there are certain global environmental catastrophes threatening our planet which can only be avoided through an intensification of international co-operation at an unprecedented scale.

Within this context, the major industrialized countries have proposed that the World Bank be the prime candidate to provide the institutional and financial framework to respond to the global environmental threats. For this purpose the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was established by the Bank in November 1990 for a three-year experimental period with initial funding exceeding $1 billion. It is being jointly managed by the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

As Mohamed El-Ashry notes in the accompanying essay, GEF has been controversial from its inception. Fundamental concerns regarding the GEF model have been raised and there are growing demands that changes in its structure and mandate be made during this early pilot period. Initial complaints by developing countries and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), indigenous peoples and social scientists were that GEF was set up by the industrialized countries without proper consultations with developing countries.

It is also no secret that many developing countries and NGOs oppose the World Bank's predominance in GEF, citing the Bank's unacceptable record of environmentally unsound development projects in the South.

There are also questions as to the four areas of environmental degradation that GEF is to focus on which are not ones which deal with the most desperate needs of the poorest nations that remain saddled with enormous debt burdens.

If it is truly to reflect the linkage between environmental problems and development needs, Southern countries argue that GEF must also commit funding to national mechanisms for the transfer of technology as well as funding for national and local conservation mechanisms, capacity building and the development of scientific, legal and educational training.

There are growing demands that changes in its structure and mandate be made during this early pilot period.

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READEX
FICHE

Radio still central to farming life

By Jon Miller

Radio remains a mainstay of rural life in much of the world. In many places, farmers leave for the fields in the morning with a tool in one hand and a portable radio in the other. While agricultural extension services have long recognized this, they have not yet taken full advantage of the educational potential of this medium.

A doctor can learn a new technique by reading a journal or calling a colleague on the phone. A business person can learn about a new opportunity by jetting off to a conference or keeping up with the financial papers.

But where can a poor farmer in a developing country learn how to build a better duck pen, how to grow better vegetables, or how to make cheap pesticide from the leaves of trees?

Right in the field, says Elizabeth Wilson, director of the 110-nation Developing Countries Farm Radio Network. Or in the kitchen, in the farmyard, at the water pump or on the way to market.

"There's a tremendous amount of information stored up around the world, but it really doesn't always get to where it's needed," Wilson explains. "So much of the work in international development has ignored communication. Researchers can produce reports and recommendations, but what's the use if they don't get to the people whose lives are really affected?"

That is where Wilson's network fits in. Her Canada-based staff sends professionally written scripts to over 700 participants, who together reach an audience of over 100 million listeners—most of them poor farmers in developing countries.

The scripts are written in English, Spanish and French, but are translated by broadcasters into more than 130 languages. Packets are mailed out four times a year and contain 12 to 15 scripts, plus bibliographies, illustrations and news from around the network. Support comes from the Canadian government and other donors. All materials are provided to network members at no cost.

"The only payment is to send us ideas," Wilson says. "There's a questionnaire with each packet, and if participants don't fill it out and send it in then they're off the list. The result is that they're always writing letters. They send their pictures, they write about their families—it becomes a very personal connection."

That connection is one of the network's major selling points. "It's not really the exchange of agricultural information that's most important for us here," says Ely Gomez, a professor of communications at the University of the Philippines and a member of the network. "It's the fellowship. It's getting together with other broadcasters, learning about their problems and hearing of their ideas, and really feeling like you are in this work together."

The idea for a network of farm broadcasters was an ambitious one, not only because of the enormity of the need, but also because of what it expected of a medium most people considered ill-suited to education.

"The general consensus is that you can use radio to create awareness, and that's about all," Wilson says. "But we think you can go further."

While much attention is paid to how a script will play on the airwaves, one of the network's most valuable contributions is the written materials it provides to participants.

Members of the network are encouraged to use the scripts as a basis for newspaper articles, teaching materials, posters, plays, songs, poems and puppet shows as well as for radio broadcasts. In some countries the materials play a major role in agricultural education, and many farmers use scripts as blueprints for farm projects. Last year one Nigerian woman travelled 180 kilometres just to pick up a copy of a script about raising rabbits.

The staff consults scientists and pores over reams of research when preparing materials for distribution, but the network often acts more as a conduit than a source of wisdom—allowing a cassava grower in Uganda to pass along a tip to a maize grower in Guatemala about how to improve egg production from farmyard chickens. "The premise is that there are really good ideas floating around which might be very popular in one country, and people in another country may have never heard of them," Wilson explains.

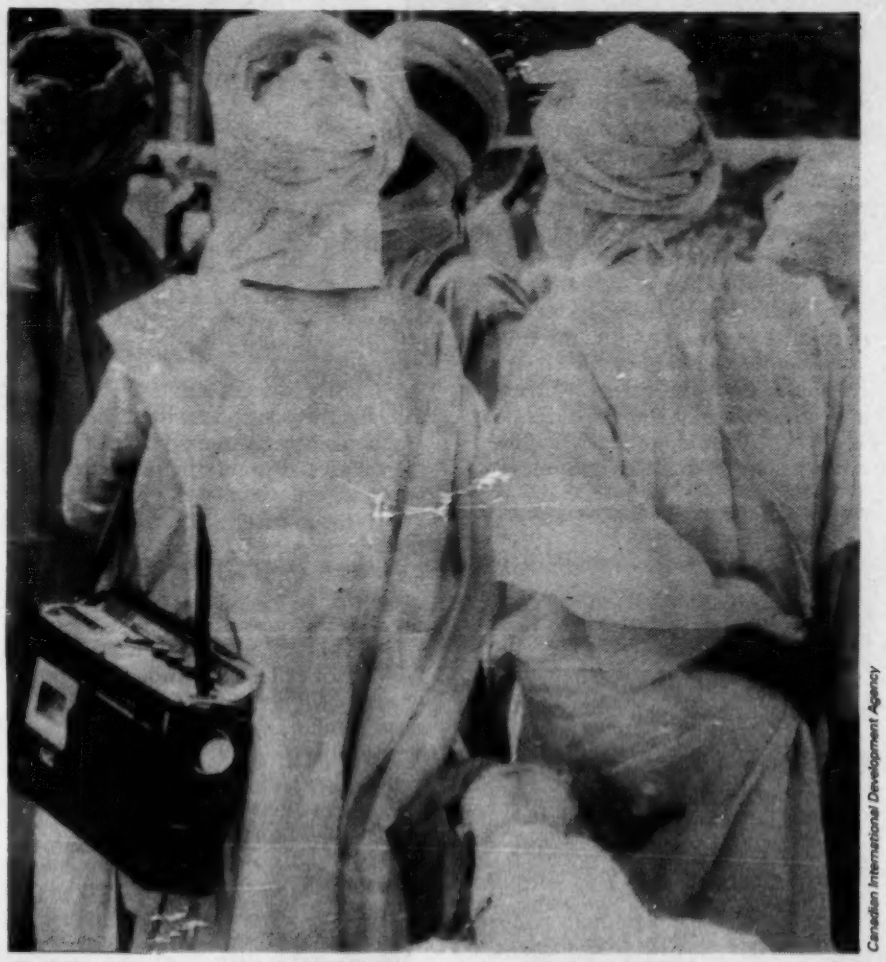
Often the results are spectacular. "We did four scripts last January describing the usefulness of neem trees," Wilson recalls. "You can boil up the seeds and the leaves and make an extract that is a very effective pesticide. So we sent out the scripts, and one of our participants from Nigeria wrote us back about it. He said neem trees grow wild in his area, but no one ever knew their value until they heard about our programme. He said the agricultural extension service in his state had taken the scripts and used them to teach 10 million farmers about neem. Ten million farmers!"

Wilson, a 55-year-old Canadian "radio addict" who spent 10 years as director of information for the University of Toronto, took over the network in November 1989, shortly after returning home from a three-year stay in the Philippines. She plans to include more information about health and nutrition in future packets, and to gear more of the scripts toward women.

"Most of the world's farmers are women, but there are almost no women in agricultural extension or broadcasting," she observes. "All the countries need women broadcasters, with a woman's viewpoint, addressing women's interests and airing at a time of day when women are at home to listen." In addition to agricultural information, each packet contains at least one script on health, safety or nutrition. ■

Agricultural Information Development Bulletin

Developing Countries Farm Radio Network, 40 Dundas Street West, Box 12, Suite 227B, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5G 2C2. Tel and Fax (416) 593-3752.



Canadian International Development Agency

***Radio has yet** to reach its full potential as a vehicle for agricultural extension work.*

Israel

A pipeline for solar energy

By Thomas Land

Rehovot—Sometime this year technologists here plan to test a promising commercial process for the transport of vast amounts of solar energy from desert regions to industrial areas hundreds of kilometres away by pipeline.

The world's first methanator pilot plant designed for solar energy applications has been built at the Weizmann Institute of Science in the town of Rehovot. It is a key component of the chemical heat pipe, an appliance for the conversion of solar radiation into chemical energy in the form of a mixture of hydrogen and carbon monoxide. The resulting synthesis gas may make it possible to store the energy of the sun over substantial periods and, if required, transport it over long distances. The process is being developed jointly by specialists from the Canadian Institute for the Energies and Applied Research and their colleagues at the Weizmann Institute.

The promise of the new technology has led to proposals for the establishment of a global organization devoted to the development of solar power, which is being considered by the influential energy committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

The new institution would be modelled on the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It is intended to co-ordinate the rapid and radical economic and technological developments worldwide that are moving towards new and environmentally acceptable sources of energy for the twenty-first century.

The solar facility comprises 64 giant computer-controlled mirrors that track the sun and concentrate its energy onto a 54-metre high receiving tower. This concentrated solar energy is absorbed in a special chemical reactor where methane and other hydrocarbons can be converted into synthesis gas. The energy-rich gas can be stored and sent by pipeline to the point of use. The energy present in the synthesis gas is recovered by means of the methanator by converting it back to methane, and in the process releasing high temperature heat.

The heat can be utilized in many ways according to the user's needs. The methane produced by the methanator may be returned to the solar plant to be used again for the production of synthesis gas, thus completing a closed loop system that neither uses any fossil fuels nor emits any gases into the atmosphere.

The feasibility of this process has been demonstrated by Moshe Levy of Weizmann's Materials Research Department, who has carried out many successful tests of the complete cycle at a 10 kw power level. His experience prompted technologists to embark on the next stage of the development of a commercial size plant, the design and construction of a chemical heat pipe loop of some 450 kw throughput.

The potential use of this chemical heat pipe and related technologies is enormous. A discussion paper issued by the United Nations Centre for Science and Technology for Development says that solar collector systems for space heating and hot water have reached technical viability in several parts of the world.

Photovoltaic collectors have gone through a continuous development process and have found many niches in the marketplace. They provide a reliable source of energy in remote areas where power requirements are small but essential, as in communications and refrigeration. And in areas where supply needs are small, sunlight is abundant and the water table high, photovoltaics are competitive with diesel power for pumping.

Proponents of a United Nations international solar energy agency hope it would promote research into the development and practical application of renewable energy sources and the saving of fossil fuels and nuclear energy globally, foster the exchange of scientific and technical information and encourage the training of scientists, engineers and administrators. The agency would advise industry and governments on the financing of solar energy projects, counsel them on ways to build up their own renewable energy technologies and purchase and construct facilities, installations and equipment. ■

Thomas Land is an author and foreign correspondent who writes on global affairs.

Canadians develop debt management software

By Shahid Akhtar

Since the debt crisis in its present proportions erupted in 1982 when Mexico, the world's largest Third World debtor, suspended its debt service payments, resolution of the crisis has been sought through a combination of policies, including debt forgiveness, debt reduction, debt rescheduling with varying degrees of concessionality, and structural adjustment programmes.

For their part, developing countries have been encouraged to improve their economic management capacity by establishing appropriate debt-management operations in the face of fluctuating interest rates and commodity prices and other variables.

The system provides an overall legal and institutional framework to monitor the contracting, spending, and repayment of loans.

The complexities of international debt management, however, have continued to plague many Third World governments. Given the size and technical complexity of developing-country debt, the task of recording and organizing loans has proved beyond the capacity of many countries. This has led to massive confusion with respect to information and procedures regarding debt payment.

One government, for example, incurred additional interest and penalty charges simply because the officer who was handling the payments was on leave and the instalment was late. Another saved millions of dollars after recognizing that a high-interest loan could be refinanced and replaced with one bearing a much lower interest rate. These particular examples are neither isolated nor hypothetical; they are indications of the often arbitrary state of debt management and data collection in developing countries.

Indeed, proper loan administration and well-informed debt management are factors now recognized as critical in dealing with the current debt crisis.

In 1983, the Technical Assistance Group (TAG) of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC), Commonwealth Secretariat, established a programme of advisory services in external debt management with the understanding that effective debt management was one of the first of many steps required for surmounting the debt crisis.

The objectives of the programme were to address the information crisis resulting from countries' inability to cope with the volume of data on external debt, and to provide a low-cost, microcomputer-based, user-friendly system for the accurate recording and quick recall of debt-related data.

TAG/CFTC turned to the International Development Research Centre (IDRC)* for technical and financial support for the development of the specialized software required to run this system, which is now known as the Commonwealth Secretariat Debt Recording and Management System (CS-DRMS).

Apart from assisting in the development of CS-DRMS, IDRC has also been active in disseminating and enhancing use of the system, including the installation of the system in Sri Lanka on a pilot-project basis; co-financing, with CFTC; the development and testing of training materials to help prepare staff in the use of the software, and assistance to the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) to make CS-DRMS available to its eight member states.

To date, the system has been installed in 26 Commonwealth countries, providing them with an overall legal and institutional framework to monitor the contracting, spending and repayment of loans. They can practise both "passive debt management" (e.g., they now know when payments are due) and more active management (e.g., the development of an effective borrowing policy, *inter alia*, to keep debt service costs to the minimum).

The CS-DRMS system enables governments to develop the ability to make a payment on time, and to view their "payment profile" (the "bunching" of due payments) to assess whether a loan could be refinanced and paid off with one bearing lower interest.

In fact, one government saved close to $5 million in interest payments using this method on the basis of the data supplied by the system. Another government department recognized after implementing the system that it was owed money by other local bodies to which proceeds of a loan had been on-lent. CS-DRMS, therefore, notifies governments of whom they owe money to, and who, in turn, owes them money. User countries have covered the costs of the system often through the savings generated by one refinancing operation.

The CS-DRMS system also generates nearly 100 different reports, including one that calculates the payments due on a day-to-day basis over a one-month period, and another "arrears report". It can also generate reports specifically required by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The fact that various international financial institutions require different reports has given many a developing-country official nightmares. Despite the difficulties involved in building and maintaining the database, the potential benefits to be derived from the effective use of the system are tremendous.

Limitations

One of the limitations of the CS-DRMS system, from a wider Third World perspective, is that the distribution and installation of the software is confined to the 49-member Commonwealth, although it has been installed in Mozambique and Thailand through special arrangements.

Recently, a joint project by IDRC and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) aimed to expand its availability by establishing an in-house capability, in IDRC, to deliver a programme of advisory services in debt management to non-Commonwealth countries, with a focus on the countries of francophone sub-Saharan Africa.

IDRC has already conducted an in-depth survey, in conjunction with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the French Ministry of Co-operation and Development, to determine the state-of-the-art with respect to debt management and to assess the needs of specific countries in francophone sub-Saharan Africa. The IDRC/CIDA project will also look into the feasibility of developing a French-language version of the software. ■

IDRC Reports

** IDRC, an organization that assists developing countries in solving their pressing development problems, may be contacted at P.O. Box 8500, Ottawa, Canada K1G 3H9. Fax (613) 238-7230.*

Aid accountability

The need of donor countries to know that the grants or loans they provide to developing countries are well used is widely recognized. On the other side of the coin, developing countries complain that the paperwork and time involved in complying with the array of accountability requirements of different donors is a burden which stretches their already thin staff resources to the breaking point.

To meet the needs of both donors and recipients, a recent international donor group dealing with aid accountability called on the United Nations to undertake an analysis and systematization of various donors' accountability needs as a first step towards formulating international accountability standards for foreign aid programmes.

A new United Nations-based Working Group on Harmonization of Accountability Requirements, with representation from donor and host countries as well as relevant international accounting and auditing associations, will review and approve proposals for the new accountability standards to be developed by the United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation for Development which, as of March of this year, becomes a part of the Department for Economic and Social Development.

Given the diversity of the aims, means, standards and procedures in different countries, the United Nations will be relying heavily on the collaboration and flexibility of the donor and recipient communities alike. The initial phase involves collection of data to create developing country aid accountability profiles. A later phase will focus on test cases of projects in selected countries with an emphasis on setting greater uniformity for differing donor requirements and on helping developing countries provide accurate and timely information required by aid donors.

In the next few years, harmonization of donors' requirements as well as capacities of recipient countries will be reviewed in depth in order to formulate and negotiate acceptable accountability standards.

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Co-operation

New focus for South Asia regional grouping

By Kalinga Seneviratne

Colombo, Sri Lanka—As a "new world order" unfolds, the seven-country South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) is moving forward in its efforts to form an economic bloc.

Upon taking over the SAARC chairmanship at its summit here in December, Sri Lankan president Ranasinghe Premadasa declared that the seven heads of state were convinced of the need to promote regional self-reliance to the maximum extent possible. SAARC, which was established in 1985, is comprised of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Unlike ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations), which came into being as an organization for economic co-operation, SAARC kept matters of regional trade and co-operation in industrialization off its agenda at meetings.

But as other regional and economic groupings make rapid strides in technology and trade, its member countries, fearing they may be left behind, have been "forced to look at each other and see what we can do for each other", according to Sri Lankan economist Gamani Corea. "There's a trend in the world today of mega-blocs where highly industrialized countries are associating with selected developing countries," said Corea, who was formerly secretary-general of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

"The United States and Canada are forming a free trade area with Central and South America. Europe 1992 will have special arrangements with Eastern Europe, and Japan is already talking about a co-operation arrangement with either the Pacific Rim countries or East Asia. All these leave out South Asia," he explains.

"We [SAARC countries] have now realized that it's in our interest to think in terms of collective self-reliance," says Shelton Kodikara, an international relations expert.

"The Colombo summit showed that the leaders are prepared to go into the nitty-gritty of economic co-operation," he declared. "So far economic co-operation has been on the back burner and now they are addressing themselves to all the important issues of trade, manufacturing and services."

According to statistics produced by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), intra-regional trade in South Asia accounted for only 2.9 per cent of world trade in 1989.

Arguing that in terms of purchasing power there is an enormous potential in the region, Corea points out that India has a middle class that is equal to Germany, France and Britain put together.

"But I wouldn't like SAARC to become a big closed economy. Co-operation should be the building block for prosperity in the region and co-operation with the rest of the world," he adds.

The so-called "Colombo Declaration" resulting from the summit has specified a time limit of five years to set up a South Asian preferential trade agreement, which was a Sri Lankan proposal.

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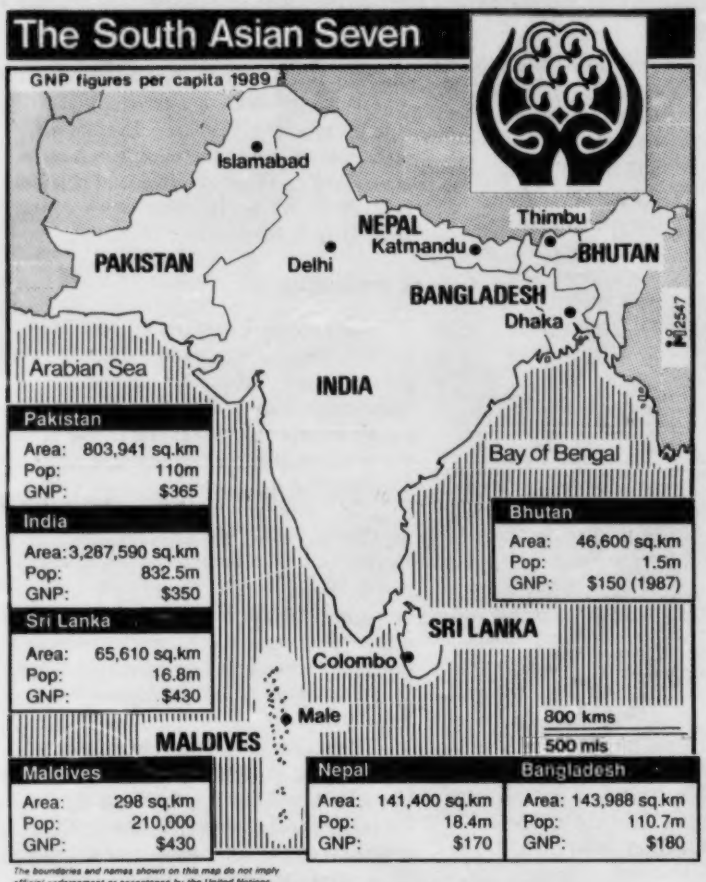
The South Asian Seven



Pests

Victors in screwworm battle

Rome—When the new world screwworm (NWS) was first detected in Libya in the mid-1980s, cattle herders were shocked at the devastation the parasitic fly larva inflicted on their livestock and doubtful its spread could be halted. But thanks to exemplary North-South and South-South co-operation, the plague has been defeated.

"With the exception of an isolated case of NWS which was discovered in April 1991", according to Idriss Jazairy, president of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), an international pilot programme designed to eradicate the screwworm was so successful by itself that the problem appears to be under control.

In January IFAD paid tribute to experts from Africa and the Americas for their role in the successful elimination of the NWS from African soil. Libya's M. Abusawa, co-director of the Regional Screwworm Eradication Programme, and the staff involved in the national programmes of Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Sudan and Tunisia were commended for their close collaboration.

Mexico's J. Irastorza and J. Wyss from the United States, respectively director and co-director of the Mexico-United States Commission for the Eradication of the Screwworm, were also honoured for the commission's crucial role in supplying the sterile insect technology (SIT), which made the biological control operations possible.

SIT involved releasing large numbers of irradiated sterile male flies over infested areas. After mating with local females, the resulting infertile eggs failed to hatch. Since the female screwworm fly mates only once in its life, saturating the area with sterile males broke the insect's life cycle, thereby reducing populations and eventually eradicating the pest.

IFAD designed and financed a Regional Pilot Biological Control Programme in 1988, shortly after it was confirmed that the parasitic fly had established a presence in North Africa. This was to be the precursor of a large-scale campaign to eradicate the NWS which, without rapid containment, could have decimated livestock and wildlife throughout North Africa, the Middle East, Central Africa and Europe.

IFAD's appeals for funds mobilized a total of $55 million from bilateral and multilateral donors to finance the large-scale campaign, carried out by the Rome-based Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Greenpeace/Dornboom

EC debates toxic waste exports

Brussels—The European Parliament's Environment Committee is seeking amendments to the European Community's (EC) legislation on toxic waste proposed by the European Commission to include a ban on all toxic waste exports outside the Community. The European Commission is the executive body of EC. The European Parliament and most EC member states, however, are in favour of an outright ban.

But some EC officials claim that an outright ban would be contrary to international free trading rules laid down by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

In the late 1980s, EC took some measures to put an end to some widely reported toxic waste scandals involving the export of hazardous industrial waste to Third World countries, particularly some in Africa.

EC's fourth Lomé co-operation agreement with 69 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states, signed in 1989, called for an outright ban of waste exports from the 12 EC states to ACP nations.

But according to Anita Fokkema of the EC unit of the non-governmental organization Greenpeace, the ACP ban has only caused a shift in the trade, with Latin America and Eastern Europe being used as alternative dumping grounds. Greenpeace has expressed its concern that the European Commission may be swayed by the powerful industrial lobby which is working to block the ban on exports of toxic waste to the Third World and Eastern Europe, in the name of free trade.

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Water conference sets global guidelines

Dublin—Some 500 environment and development experts have reached agreement on a wide range of guidelines aimed to address the growing scarcity and misuse of freshwater resources worldwide. Representatives from non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations from 113 countries who attended the International Conference on Water and the Environment (ICWE) in Dublin in January produced the so-called "Dublin Statement" which cites the overuse and pollution of fresh water as a serious and growing threat to sustainable development and protection of the environment.

The Dublin Statement is based on four guiding principles which call for "concerted action . . . to reverse the present trends of overconsumption, pollution and rising threats from drought and floods" *(see box)*. Significantly, three out of the four principles set down by the predominantly scientific and technical participants focus on the human dimension of freshwater resources.

UNICEF/Philip Wolmuth

In response to a request by the Preparatory Committee for the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in June, participants at the week-long conference made recommendations for action at local, national and international levels.

Based on four guiding principles, its action agenda makes recommendations aimed to enable countries to tackle their water resource problems on several fronts. These include the alleviation of poverty and disease through accelerated water resource development and management; increased preparedness in the face of natural disasters, especially drought and floods; reduction of wasteful water use through efficient management, reuse and conservation of water in industry, agriculture and in residential areas; better control over reckless municipal water use and pollution to assure the sustained development of urban areas; and the introduction of incentives for rural populations to adopt new approaches to rainfed and irrigated agricultural production for greater food security.

The action plan also calls for safeguarding aquatic ecosystems, especially through the integrated management of river basins and pollution; the preparation of integrated management plans for international watersheds, particularly shared river basins, in order to avoid or resolve water conflicts.

Substantial investment

The conference stressed that implementation of action programmes for water and sustainable development will require a substantial investment, not only in capital projects but also in building the capacity of people and institutions to plan and implement those projects.

Measurements of components of the water cycle and of other aspects of the environment affecting water are an essential basis for achieving effective water management, the report said. With the potential threat of global warming, the need for such measurements of the hydrological cycle is urgently required. To facilitate the participation and co-operation of all interested governments, the various United Nations institutions working on water issues, regional and non-governmental organizations and the private sector, the ICWE discussed a proposal for consideration by UNCED—a world water council to which all such groups could belong.

Focusing on action on water problems, it proposed that the first full assessment of implementation of the ICWE water programme should be undertaken by the year 2000.

The Dublin Statement also requested UNCED to consider the financial requirements for water-related programmes in the funding for implementation.

The conference was hosted by the Irish government and convened by the World Meteorological Organization on behalf of 24 United Nations agencies and bodies working in the area of water.

In commending the Dublin Statement to the world leaders who will assemble in Rio at the Earth Summit in June, ICWE participants urged "all governments to study carefully the specific activities and means of implementation recommended in the conference report and to translate these recommendations into urgent action programmes for water and sustainable development."

Guiding Principles

The International Conference on Water and the Environment sets out recommendations for action at local, national and international levels, based on four guiding principles:

1. **Fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment.**
2. **Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy-makers at all levels.**
3. **Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water.**
4. **Water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic good.**

For more information about the conference, write to ICWE Secretariat, c/o World Meteorological Organization, 41, Giuseppe-Motta, P.O. Box 2300, CH 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland.

UNCTAD at a crossroads

Continued from page 1

lost some of its relevance.

The divergent North/South positions expressed during the meeting are now familiar, though the broader acceptance of free trade and market-oriented reforms has gained common ground. Developing country delegates called for greater access to markets of developed countries and more debt relief to spur their economies.

For their part, developed countries said that economic progress can best be achieved by accelerating the shift to market economies in the developing world, promoting increased foreign investment, and improving government efficiency and protection of human rights.

The developing countries, whose joint position was reflected in a declaration adopted by the Group of 77, call for UNCTAD to play a "crucial role" on global economic issues through "action-oriented" programmes aimed to address their debt problems, commodity dependence and deteriorating terms of trade.

Speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, Abdulhossein Vahaji, minister of trade of Iran, called for a "new partnership for development" between developing and developed countries, calling for action on rolling back protectionism, seeking solutions to the external debt crisis, reducing international interest rates, using resources gained through disarmament for aid to developing countries, improving access to markets in developed countries for exports from developing countries, and improving prices and market stability for developing countries' commodity exports.

In the face of developing country demand for a broader system of trade preferences and mechanisms to improve the prices of basic products, French delegate Jean-Michel Marlaud, who is also president of the UNCTAD working group on economic issues, said these issues would be dealt with by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) as part of the ongoing Uruguay Round of trade talks in April. This view, that several of UNCTAD's responsibilities could now be carried out by other international bodies, was an underlying theme throughout the meeting.

According to UNCTAD secretary-general Dadzie, the task of reforming the body should proceeed from the definition of new and emerging issues, including a new international partnership for development, global interdependence and ecologically sustainable development. UNCTAD's work on sustainable development will focus on the promotion of ecologically sound technologies, the impact of patterns of production and consumption on sustainable development, and the follow-up of recommendations of the Earth Summit in Rio in June.

As for institutional reforms, the Trade and Development Board, UNCTAD's highest executive body in between sessions of the conference, will have a strengthened policy function in adapting the organization's work to changing world economic circumstances and reviewing work priorities. UNCTAD's traditional intergovernmental machinery, it was agreed, would be suspended in order to try out new formulas for dealing with issues. Instead, there will be standing and special committees (on commodities, poverty alleviation, economic co-operation among developing countries, and on fostering competitive service sectors in developing countries) and *ad hoc* working groups.

The conference also laid the groundwork for the possible convening of a world conference on commodities and of an international symposium on trade efficiency in 1994. ■

Lisa Haney

Aviation

Unprecedented decline in air traffic

Montreal—Total scheduled traffic of the world's airlines in 1991 was 4 per cent below the 1990 traffic, according to year-end estimates released by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Similarly, ICAO calculated that international scheduled traffic was down by 5 per cent, representing the first year since airline statistics were first recorded by ICAO in the 1940s that world air traffic had shown a decline. However, there were indications that international traffic was starting to pick up again in some regions.

Total international and domestic traffic of airlines of ICAO's 164 member states in 1991 is estimated at some 225 billion ton-kilometres. The airlines carried about 1.12 billion passengers on scheduled services of which about 262 million travelled on international services.

Air freight, both total and international, is estimated to have declined about 4 per cent in 1991. Air mail is estimated to have decreased 4 per cent in total services while remaining virtually unchanged in international services.

For 1992, ICAO forecast, for the short term, a 4 per cent increase in passenger-kilometres performed. It should be noted, however, that this figure also includes domestic traffic.

No more business as usual

Continued from page 1

reactions. One is to revert to a definition of sustainable development as "growth as usual" although at a slower rate. The other is to define sustainable development as "development without growth in throughput beyond environmental carrying capacity".

The latter model, development without growth, is based on a distinction between growth and development. "To grow" means to increase in size by the assimilation or accretion of materials; "to develop" means to expand or realize potentialities, to bring to a fuller, greater or better state. When something grows it gets quantitatively bigger; when it develops it gets qualitatively better, or at least different. Quantitative growth and qualitative improvement follow different laws. Our planet develops over time without growing. Our economy, a subsystem of the finite and non-growing earth, must eventually adapt to a similar pattern of development without throughput growth. The time for such adaptation is now.

The way we undervalue natural capital services and fail to account for natural asset degradation often means that we are impoverishing ourselves while imagining that our economies are growing.

Unfortunately, current GNP accounting conventions conflate growth and development, counting both as "economic growth". The authors sharply distinguish between throughput growth (growth proper) and efficiency improvement (development in the dictionary sense).

Leaders who participated in the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), which produced the Brundtland Report, seem to have been torn between these two directions as they faced putting the concept of sustainability into practice.

Two realisms conflict. On the one hand, political realism rules out radical solutions to income redistribution and population stability as politically difficult, if not impossible. Therefore, the Brundtland Report concludes that the world economy has to expand "by a factor of five or 10" in order to cure poverty.

On the other hand, ecological realism accepts that the world economy has already exceeded the sustainable limits of the global ecosystem and that a five- to tenfold expansion of anything remotely resembling the present economy would simply speed us from today's long-run unsustainability to imminent collapse.

The authors believe that in the conflicts between biophysical realities and political realities, the latter must eventually give ground. Thus as the planet makes the transition to sustainability, our choice becomes planning for an orderly transition, or letting physical limits and environmental damage dictate the timing and course of the transition.

While the authors agree with Brundtland that we should seek to limit, arrest or even reduce the throughput associated with economic activity, they are far less optimistic about our ability to achieve this quickly. The vast expansion in economic activity projected by Brundtland is therefore bound to be associated with major rises in throughput. This reflects the fact that successful substitution of human-made capital for natural resources is slow and limited, and that the necessary technology cannot be organized on cue as the optimists would wish.

New policies

There are ways to encourage more sustainable policies. The authors call for an acceleration of technological development, for example, aimed at reducing the natural resource content of given economic activities. They suggest substantially increasing "environmental" taxes on throughput (such as carbon emission or mineral severance taxes), in order to accelerate new technologies and reduce environmentally stressful throughput.

They also argue that we should tax the things we want to reduce (pollution and depletion) rather than the things we want to increase (employment and income). As these environmental taxes generate needed public revenues, we can ease up on income taxes, especially on low incomes, even to the extent of using some of the new revenues to finance a negative income tax on very low incomes.

South needs growth

Still, the authors ask: Can development without throughput growth (sustainable development) cure existing poverty? They believe that it cannot. Qualitative improvement in the efficiency with which resources are used will greatly help, but will not be sufficient to cure poverty. The reduction of throughput intensity per dollar of GNP in some rich countries is all to the good, but means little to poor countries still striving for adequate food, clothing and shelter. Basic necessities have a large and irreducible physical dimension, unlike say information processing.

The Brundtland proposal to alleviate poverty by an annual 3 per cent global rise in per capita income translates initially into annual per capita income increments of $633 for the United States and $3.6 for Ethiopia. By the end of 10 years, such growth will have raised Ethiopia's per capita income by $41 (hardly sufficient to dent poverty there) while that of the United States will have risen by $7,257. The greater disparity of international income levels that would result calls into question the desirability of Brundtland's projections.

Why not tax the things we want to reduce (pollution and depletion) rather than the things we want to increase (employment and income)?

The authors argue that it is neither ethical nor helpful to the environment to expect poor countries to cut or arrest their development, which tends to be highly associated with throughput growth. Therefore the rich countries, which after all are responsible for most of today's environmental damage, and whose material well-being can sustain a halt to or even a decline in throughput growth, must take the lead in this respect. Poverty reduction will require considerable growth, as well as development, in developing countries. But ecological constraints are real and more growth for the poor must be balanced by negative throughput growth for the rich.

Development by the rich must be used to free resources (source and sink functions of the environment) for growth and development so urgently needed by the poor. Large-scale transfers to the poorer countries also will be required, especially as the impact of economic stability in rich countries may depress terms of trade and lower economic activity in developing countries. Higher prices for the exports of poorer countries therefore will be required. Most importantly, population stability is essential to reduce the need for growth everywhere, but especially where population growth is highest, that is, in the poor countries.

Politically, it is very difficult to face up to the need for income redistribution and population stability. If the concept of sustainable development becomes a verbal formula for glossing over these harsh realities, then it will have been a big step backwards. It is in this sense that the authors of this volume are seeking to build on Brundtland before the tempest of conventional political "realisms" erodes the foundations that WCED constructed with such care and foresight.

Such an agenda will be exceptionally difficult to implement. Markets, for example, will have to learn to function without expansion, without wars, without waste and without advertising that encourages waste. Economic policy will have to suppress certain activities in order to allow others to expand, so that the sum total remains within the biophysical budget constraint of a non-growing throughput. This adds up to a formidable political agenda. That is why exceptional political wisdom and leadership are so urgently required. ■

Earth Summit overload

By Gillian Phillips

For non-governmental organizations (NGOs) interested in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) process, the amount of information now available is overwhelming. As the official United Nations process and related NGO activities generate unprecedented volumes of material, at least one NGO is attempting to sort out the overwhelming flow for its colleagues.

NGONET'92, a project funded by the Dutch development agency NOVIB, repackages and redistributes environment/development information for NGOs in a variety of formats including electronic mail, hard copy, newsletters and possibly community radio.

The information is being organized with the understanding that United Nations conferences often produce official documents couched in language which make it difficult for NGOs to easily isolate information relevant to their work. Compounding these problems, the UNCED-related information is now in demand by all types of NGOs, with widely varying access to funds, levels of technological expertise, communications channels and operational languages.

NGONET'92 also aims to facilitate discussion forums electronically and via newsletter on those items not on the "official" agenda such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and critiques of the Summit itself. NGONET'92 has also reached an agreement with the Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analysis (IBASE) in Rio to provide services which will enhance communication of information to and from Brazilian NGOs involved in UNCED and the massive preparations now under way for the NGO "parallel" activities in Rio in June.

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For further information contact Gillian Phillips, Miguel de Corro 1462, Montevideo 11200, Uruguay. Fax: +598-2-419222; E-mail: ax:ngonet, ngonet(a)ax.igc.org.

PrepCom IV:

New York dress rehearsal for Rio

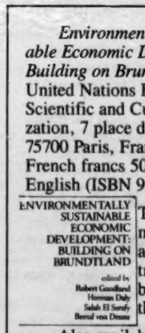
by Michael McCoy

New York—Final negotiations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) are taking place from 2 March to 3 April at United Nations headquarters. For negotiators, this five-week window of opportunity will determine the success of the Earth Summit in Rio in June. As talks begin, however, prospects for progress in the fourth and final meeting of the Preparatory Committee here are dim.

A preview of North/South positions and the mood of compromise and cooperation on the part of the major protagonists in areas like biodiversity, financial resources and legal mechanisms, were revealed in the two weeks of negotiations on climate change negotiations in New York immediately before PrepCom IV.

Richard B. Mock

Environmentally Sustainable Economic Development: Building on Brundtland, 1991, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 7 place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France. 100 pp. French francs 50. Available in English (ISBN 9263-102781-6).



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First, Southern governments were looking for any signs of good faith by the North that they are serious about developing realistic methods of financing the implementation of Agenda 21 (the all-important post-Rio plan of action on environment and development for the international community). They got their answer on 25 February in the final week of the negotiations around climate change when the OECD (the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, the Paris-based group of the 24 richest countries) tabled a paper that represented a summary of their commitments in terms of the implementation of the hoped-for climate change convention. Even Northern delegates maintained off the record that the document was "weak, watered down, a mish-mash of tired and unsubstantial generalities". In short, it was not a good omen for PrepCom IV.

According to veteran UNCED negotiator Alexandra Besseredi of Canada, "the G-77 (the name for the block of Southern governments in the United Nations General Assembly) will be looking for the North to present a 'menu of options' on financial mechanisms to achieve sustainable development in the first week of PrepCom IV." Such a realistic menu would indicate the good faith of the North in its participation in the two-year UNCED preparatory process.

Biodiversity in trouble

There are reasons for pessimism in other issue areas as well, such as the deadlocked state of the negotiations for the biodiversity convention, which, together with the climate change convention, is expected to be a measure of the Earth Summit's success. The two major protagonists in this debate, India and the United States, have both announced that they would not sign any proposed convention.

At a February briefing organized for Washington, D.C.-based NGOs by the United States National Wildlife Federation, Eleanor Savage, the point person on the United States delegation on this matter, stated unequivocally "that the US would not sign or ratify such a convention". The question remains whether or not this is its final position on the issue.

Shortly afterwards, at a press conference in New Delhi, the Indian government announced that it would not sign the biodiversity convention either. Now all of this could very well be pre-PrepCom, hard-line positioning by two key negotiators, but observers feel that these stated positions do not help to build the atmosphere of cooperation and consensus-building that is necessary to conclude these most difficult negotiations successfully.

All eyes on OECD

Attention in these next several weeks of negotiation, in short, is centered on what the OECD countries (the North) are willing to do on financial resources, Agenda 21, institutional mechanisms, the Earth Charter and the climate change convention.

The United States government appears to be comfortable in its role as the chronic naysayer in almost every area of the UNCED agenda. Long-time NGO observers of the past sessions of the Preparatory Committee and UNCED delegations agree in off-the-record comments that the central question is whether other OECD countries will break ranks with the intransigent United States positions. Where will the differences come on any issue? From the Nordics? The European Community? The CANZ group (Canada, Australia, New Zealand)? From Japan?

Hundreds of NGO representatives are attending PrepCom IV in order to exert pressure on their delegations. "NGOs are here in force because in many ways, the negotiations here are more important than what goes on in Rio," says NGO representative Elin Enge, co-ordinator of the Norwegian Coalition for Environment and Development. "When delegates are overly cautious about taking bolder steps, we are there to put pressure on them."

At this point, however, no delegation seems to have enough political support from its national capital to differ on issues of substance with the United States delegation. In fact, in several cases, delegations to UNCED negotiations have been given strict instructions not to take different positions "from our major trading partners". Trade and economic policy seem to be more important at this stage, when the Uruguay Round of negotiations of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade remains deadlocked, than long-term environment and development concerns. Other observers point to the problems posed by upcoming national elections in a number of OECD countries.

In fact, there is only one case where OECD countries have broken ranks on any Earth Summit-related issue. In February, the European Community announced that it would levy a community-wide "carbon tax" on all fossil fuels (gasoline, coal, etc.) as one important measure to assure that EC member states meet agreed upon targets for carbon emission targets by the year 2000.

The institution of this tax is the first policy commitment by a governmental body in the North that is directed at a serious impediment to achieving global sustainability, the overconsumption of scarce material resources by Northern economies. Could the institution of the carbon tax by the European Community be the first step in this direction by other OECD countries? Japan will be hosting a meeting of national environmental ministers this coming April in Tokyo; this may be the moment that the Japanese government announces a major financial commitment to a post-Rio international fund that would be used to help pay for the costs of establishing sustainable environmental standards worldwide.

With the likelihood of securing biodiversity and/or climate change conventions at the Earth Summit now in doubt, UNCED delegations and the secretariat are under more pressure to at least assure a successful conclusion with a green light on the Rio Charter on Environment and Development (Earth Charter) and a useful plan of action (Agenda 21).

Achieving that, the Earth Summit could then launch an "International Decade of Sustainable Development", with two subsequent United Nations conferences to mark the mid- and end-decade, as was done for the Decade for Women (1975-1985). All that would be required at the Earth Summit would be an agreement on the framework for the international community to achieve the original lofty goals over the next 10 years. However, this will require governments to at least agree on a simple framework. Only a successful PrepCom IV can assure this modest goal. ■

Michael McCoy is director of the United States-based Center for Citizen Advocacy, and is Development Forum's *special correspondent for the Earth Summit.*

Figuring environmental costs

The movement to include the cost to natural environment when calculating the prices of consumer goods is drawing increasing support from economists and NGOs involved in preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), to be held in June.

Coen van Beuningen, an economic adviser to a major Dutch development agency, Hivos, is among those developing practical methods of integrating this neglected costing variable. "Man-made capital is no longer the most scarce factor in the production of goods," van Beuningen explained at the Paris meeting of NGOs gathered to prepare NGO policy for UNCED last December. "Rather, natural capital is the real dwindling resource."

Land depletion

One example of the hidden environmental costs, he says, is the depletion of productive land which is taking place at a rate of 1 per cent of the earth's total per year due to erosion, pollution and overuse.

To slow this depletion of productive land, van Beuningen said, there would have to be worldwide changes in agricultural methods. The necessary shift from traditional policies favouring "economically efficient" methods to "environmentally efficient" ones, recognized by both North and South, will be expensive.

Such proposals echo similar thinking within the development community. Concerned economists argue that the concept of "sound economics" should be changed to include a valuation of environmental costs of development projects and that basic economic accounting methods should be expanded to include environmental accounting.

Measures such as gross national product, for instance, fail to take account of the economic value of environmental savings and preservation of natural resources.

If it is possible to include available financial capital resources in the calculation of "wealth", then available natural "capital" resources should be included in the same way.

Organizations like Hivos are proposing that each country establish national targets for reduction of soil degradation per year. This would include both "developed" and "developing" countries.

The net effect would be, however, that prices for agricultural exports would increase. But, as Alistair Smith of the United Kingdom-based NGO Farmer Link explained, these prices need not necessarily be passed on to the final consumer, as retail prices for goods often do not reflect the prices of their raw materials.

Economists like van Beuningen think that world trade regulations also have to be expanded to discourage trading in environmentally unfriendly products. Product labels should, he noted, display the production system used, as well as content analysis.

Van Beuningen's own organization, Hivos, which funds development projects out of the official Dutch aid budget, is working on a model bilateral co-operation package with Costa Rica which may show how developing countries could be compensated for the switch to environmentally sound methods through development aid.

As part of this programme, the Netherlands will agree to reduce its own levels of soil degradation, while assisting Costa Rica to shift to environmentally friendly production methods.

At the same time the Netherlands will protect the goods produced by such methods against competition from those produced in an environmentally damaging way.

IPS

Unveiling common ground

Continued from page 1

mountains that overlook the Mediterranean to the Bulgarian-Greek border to the snow-covered woodlands between Russia and Finland; from the flooded forests of the Danube floodplain to the cave-ridden limestone hills between Italy and Slovenia.

Aware of the rush for economic development as the peoples of the continent's two halves resume contact with one another, Langer's vision is of a continent coming together to protect its natural heritage and to avoid the conflagrations that have caused so much destruction in the past.

The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

The 24 wild areas designated as ecological bricks should also become separate political dominions, outside national control and in the communal charge of the countries of Europe.

In Washington, GEF has embraced Langer's idea as part of its funding of projects around the world to preserve biodiversity. In Vienna, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) also has adopted his cause.

Langer is no purist. The ecological bricks cannot be empty of people, he says, but must "be areas where sustainable economies operate, where tourism helps to pay for conservation, where forestry is sustainably managed and where pollution is not allowed a free hand." Sustainable development is not just an issue for the Third World, he argues. Europe must embrace it, too.

Last autumn, with the backing of the Czech government, Langer and his supporters at WWF established in Prague a trust fund—the European Trust for Natural and Cultural Wealth—to manage the network of proposed ecological bricks.

They include Bulgaria's Rhodope mountains; the Sumava forest reserve on the Czech side of the border with Germany; the forests of the Krknose and Tatra mountains—acid-rain blasted hillsides on the border between Czechoslovakia and Poland; plus parts of the Danube river floodplain, a fairytale landscape of flood forests and lazy backwaters straddling the borders of Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

Other border regions likely to be included are the Eastern Carpathian mountains, a remote region of bears, wolves and wild European bison that stretches from Poland into the Ukraine and Czechoslovakia; and the giant Danube delta, one of Europe's largest wildernesses, which was partly obliterated by Romania's drive for agricultural modernization under president Ceausescu.

Alexander Zinke, head of WWF in Austria, was an early enthusiast for Langer's scheme and has masterminded talks between a coalition of environmental groups and the World Bank, as well as encouraging West European commercial banks to sponsor particular ecological bricks.

WWF International is already advising the Czech government on the Sumava biosphere reserve, drawing up a management plan to preserve the thick forests of the former border zone, while allowing some economic development, including tourism, forestry, handicrafts and limited agriculture.

Zinke says: "The bricks initiative is involving 65 environmental groups from both East and West Europe. The speed with which we have been able to develop the plan shows how strongly we had developed links with Eastern environmentalists even before the Iron Curtain came down."

Some people have argued that these green East-West links, with joint campaigns over such issues as acid rain and large dams on the Danube, were an important reason for the growth of popular opposition to Communist governments during the 1980s. Certainly, activists from WWF in Austria made regular trips East to help Hungarians successfully oppose the Nagymaros dam on the Danube.

Indeed, in a speech at the European Parliament at the end of last year, Langer attempted to take the bricks initiative out of the volatile domestic political realms. He proposed that all 24 wild areas designated as ecological bricks should also become separate political dominions, outside national control and in the communal charge of the countries of Europe. He sees this utopian vision as "a model for European reconciliation".

Meanwhile, the World Bank has its own proposals for developing the Ecological Bricks idea. Early documentation on the plan for GEF to contribute an initial $6 million to the Trust Fund suggested that the Trust organize debt-for-nature swaps of the kind so far confined to Third World nations.

Zinke says that both Poland and Bulgaria, which have large international debts and substantial areas of mountain forests that need protection, might subscribe to a debt-for-nature arrangement. They could agree to provide the Trust with funds to protect ecological brick areas in return for the cancellation of some debt.

The urgency of providing protection for some of the border zones between the East and the West is nowhere more vividly shown than in the valley of the River Danube, as it flows eastwards from Austria. Here the river's gradient slackens and it spreads out, breaking into several separate streams, each flowing through areas of forest.

The flooded Hainburg forest became famous when environmentalists succeeded in persuading the Austrian government to halt plans to cut down the forest to make way for a hydroelectric dam. Now a dam in Czechoslovakia, downstream of Bratislava, along with agricultural drainage schemes and a canal to improve navigation, all threaten to dry out this large wetland region, unless they are carefully managed.

The pressure for development at this critical crossroads between the East and the West is huge, as the choked roads leading to the border crossings amply show. There are plans for new motorways, river ports and a high-speed railway link beside the Danube, as well as for industrial parks and more power generation.

Sustainable development is not just an issue for the Third World. Europe must embrace it, too.

In the face of this pressure, both Langer and Zinke believe that the growing awareness and availability of funds to protect and expand these areas has caught the attention and imagination of many Europeans. The time is ripe, they feel, to establish a common ground and build what Mikhail Gorbachev has called the "common house of Europe". ■

Fred Pearce is a journalist and author based in London, specializing in international environmental issues.

GEF has a lot to prove

Continued from page 3

In a recent statement by NGOs to a GEF participants' meeting in Geneva, several specific principles and recommendations for changes in GEF were enunciated. These include the need for GEF projects to respond directly to needs and priorities of local communities directly affected by projects. They also recommended that complete GEF project documentation be made available to the public in appropriate languages and throughout the project cycle. This same principle should be applied to other World Bank projects and loans associated with GEF projects.

They called for establishing specific guidelines for projects with the participation of scientists, social scientists and representatives of potentially affected population groups, e.g. indigenous peoples' representatives in the area of biodiversity protection.

Other major NGO and developing country criticisms of GEF are that virtually all World Bank projects are essentially top-down and involve only mega-NGOs. Some of them fear how a new "green conditionality" will impact local communities. There is fundamental concern that GEF will not be able to operate effectively submerged within the bureaucracies of three separate agencies.

As noted by El-Ashry, developing countries have voiced their fears that the industrialized nations will use GEF to divert attention from the need for major reversals of environmentally damaging economic policies and practices in their own countries and from their primary responsibility for the environmental degradation in both the North and the South.

However, I believe constructive "structural adjustment" achievements by GEF could occur during its pilot period. It would be a major accomplishment, for example, if GEF becomes the institutional mechanism that performs "ecological audits" of multilateral lending institutions. Perhaps, given its restricted mandate, GEF would limit system-wide auditing to its four primary areas of focus.

Second, one of the possible modifications to GEF being pressed by some developing countries could result in a change to mechanisms and formulas which are a compromise between "one dollar, one vote" and "one country, one vote". These would be an accomplishment which could be applied to the other funding and implementing mechanisms that are sure to evolve from the UNCED process.

It was reassuring to read in a recent article by Peter Thacher, senior adviser to UNCED, that GEF's procedures and mandate may be revised by the time of the Earth Summit.

Indeed, everyone should recognize the importance of GEF as a pilot programme and thereby as a model for future mechanisms. Even if GEF is able to realize its loftiest goals during the next few years, there would still be a need for additional funding mechanisms called for by scores of nations and NGOs. UNCED secretary-general Maurice Strong estimates that developing countries will need at least $125 billion a year to adopt measures necessary to halt the destruction of the earth's atmosphere, biodiversity and pollution of the oceans and rivers.

For a relatively modest amount of money, GEF could provide the seed funding for research and development for establishing new types of institutional authority called for in the Brundtland report and by many countries participating in the Earth Summit.

Thus, while one can hope the GEF experiment succeeds, it must be seen as a bare beginning open to significant modification and thought of as only one of several funding mechanisms necessary for the commitment of resources by the world community at a scale unprecedented in peacetime. ■

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Guatemala

Preschoolers find a home in Conacaste

By John Burbidge

Spurred by the United Nations-sponsored Education for All conference in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 (see DF, *January-February 1990 and March-April 1990), educators have stepped up efforts to develop replicable, low-cost programmes for "lifetime learning" aimed at the millions who otherwise face life-long illiteracy. Preschool programmes can clearly set the stage for this process. The Conacaste preschool described below demonstrates how, with carefully targeted help from the outside and strong local participation, even the poorest villagers can set in motion their own transformation.*

Fourteen years ago, San Miguel Conacaste was just another poor Guatemalan village. Situated in an increasingly arid part of El Progreso state, this neglected community of 1,500 people depended on a good rainy season to obtain a meagre crop of corn, beans and tomatoes.

Today, Conacaste boasts a dozen stores, electricity, a potable water system, and a health clinic with a resident nurse and doctor. But its proudest achievement is its community-run preschool.

Its preschool's story closely parallels Conacaste's relationship with a non-governmental organization that became an important catalyst in the village's development. The preschool began in 1978 when a small but enthusiastic group of village women decided that the community needed a preschool and offered their services to begin one.

Inspired by the commitment of a young woman, Eva Angelina Fajardo, herself from a family of 18 brothers and sisters, the women wanted a preschool that would provide care for their children and give them a headstart in education that none of them had enjoyed.

After some false starts, the women turned to a small team of volunteers from the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), an international non-governmental organization which had been invited to work in the village. With experience in community-development projects in a number of countries around the world, ICA's work was guided by the premise that when a community comes together and participates in planning its future, it develops a sense of ownership of the plan and a strong commitment to seeing it implemented.

Thus ICA's contribution to the preschool project was not money, but expertise and training in participatory methods, consensus-building processes, educational approaches and networking beyond the village.

The Institute's specific experience in early childhood education had begun in Chicago's impoverished west side, working with an experimental school which pioneered the training of local residents to staff community-run preschools. The programme drew heavily on the work of contemporary masters of early childhood education like Piaget, Bruner and Montessori.

A key to ICA's education programme in the urban ghetto, which is also highly relevant for poverty-stricken villages, is the replacement of images of victimization by those of empowerment—changing "I can't" into "I can". Likewise in Conacaste, ICA helped the women develop their own curriculum, based on ICA's "imaginal education", an approach to teaching which stresses the importance of images in influencing and changing behaviour.

Overcoming obstacles

Having enlisted ICA's participation and support, there were a number of obstacles to the school that needed to be overcome. One critical issue was the need for villagers to understand the importance of early education. In a village struggling for economic survival, this was no easy task. One way to promote understanding was the establishment of a parents' committee, the first of its kind to be registered by the government in the state of El Progreso.

Committee members now help fund the preschool through the sale of food and clothing, and by conducting raffles and dances. They also appoint and pay a community person to prepare food. One of their most important functions is co-ordination between teachers and parents. Every Friday, teachers meet with parents to report on and answer questions about the children's progress. Through persistent efforts, the committee was also instrumental in securing permission from the Ministry of Public Works to use a prefabricated building in the village for the preschool.

Another key hurdle was making it clear to the community that the preschool was really their project, thus assuring its sustainability. "In the early stages, there was a tendency on the part of parents and teachers to depend on ICA to deal with crises," explains ICA consultant Barbara Alerding, who has known the project since its inception. "When ICA decided to shift its role from 'mediator' to 'adviser', things began to change. There were painful gaps when funding didn't come through, but eventually the villagers realized they were in charge."

Another problem involved winning the support of the local primary school principal. The Conacaste preschool is entirely run by village women, many of whom are continuing to be trained in modern methods usually associated with more sophisticated and better-funded urban preschools. Obviously, an innovative preschool of this kind could easily be perceived as a threat to the existing education authorities.

At first, the principal was resistant. But she was won over when she saw that the children coming from the preschool were more eager to learn, more developed in their language and co-ordination skills and more able to function as a group. She has now ruled that all children must participate in the preschool before entering first grade.

One of the events that permitted the Conacaste programme to extend beyond the village was an international conference in Guatemala which brought together educational experts from around the world and made a significant impact on the approach to learning taken by educators in Guatemala.

When Conacaste preschool teachers were invited to attend the conference, they were at first apprehensive. Still, as intimidating as an international conference was, these village women boldly participated in the event, which had a lasting impact on them.

UNICEF/Jorgen Schytte

Conacaste's preschool is *likely to survive and flourish because it relies on the resources and talents of the community it serves.*

First, they gained a new level of confidence in themselves and their ability to teach other community people how to become preschool teachers. And second, they were introduced to a fascinating array of new teaching methods, several of which they decided to incorporate into their existing curriculum.

One of these methods draws on the innovative work of the educator Howard Gardner. It is based on his "seven intelligences" idea that every human being has multiple intelligences, seven of which are logical/mathematical, linguistic, visual/spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal. Teaching to only one intelligence may well impede learning.

The other presentation which intrigued the Conacaste teachers was Chicago-based educator Bernice McCarthy's 4-Mat System, which codifies the different styles by which people learn. Her four basic learning styles are imaginative, analytic, common sense and dynamic learners. Since any group of people is likely to contain all four learning styles, it is important for teachers to present their material so that it speaks to all types.

While McCarthy's books have many examples on how to create curriculum for primary-aged children through to adults, they contain nothing dealing specifically with preschoolers. Taking up the challenge, the Conacaste preschool staff decided to rewrite their curriculum, making use of all four learning styles, as well as the seven intelligences.

Seven intelligences

Choosing one thing they wanted to teach each day, the women brainstormed lists of activities under the seven intelligences, selected activities from the list and placed them in a four-session format corresponding to the different learning styles. They always began with the question: "Why is this information or concept important?"

An example of this process is seen in one of the favourite curriculum events, personal hygiene. Using preschool staff who are also community health caretakers, the lesson is designed to help children understand, for example, why they contract diarrhoea and how they can prevent it, starting the process by having the children paint pictures of things they use to keep themselves clean—soap, water, toothbrushes and toothpaste and proceeding gradually to hands-on demonstrations.

Today these women are sharing what they have learned with neighbouring villages. Using their preschool as a model, the Conacaste teachers, in conjunction with ICA staff, have trained other villagers to write and teach their own curriculum and to set up and operate their own preschools. Since 1989, four more preschools have opened in the area, with each new preschool replicating itself in a neighbouring village. In all, 16 teachers and over 300 children are now involved in the programme.

The Conacaste preschool and its satellite schools bring new hope to early childhood education in Guatemala and other countries, where traditionally it is given a low priority. Not only have they given an emerging generation of indigenous children a headstart in life, but they have developed a programme that enables untrained local villagers to become enthusiastic educators. Because this, and other programmes, are developed by local people as an integral part of the community, their ongoing success seems assured, even if ICA were to further reduce its involvement or cease participating altogether. ■

John Burbidge, an Australian national, is publications co-ordinator for ICA West, a division of the Institute of Cultural Affairs serving the western United States. He is the editor of Approaches That Work In Rural Development, *the third book in the series on the International Exposition of Rural Development.*

One tangible result of the efforts of the Conacaste preschool teachers has been the production of two new preschool manuals. *Nuevas Metodologías: Para un Programa de Párvulos*, is on the philosophy and methods used; *Manual: Como Iniciar un Programa de Párvulos*, describes how to set up a preschool, including daily lesson plans. The two manuals are unique in that they have been written in part by local village teachers and because they provide a detailed daily curriculum that puts into practice the latest learning methods. Together, these two volumes comprise a wealth of practical, up-to-date information and first-hand, grassroots experience.

For further information about the work of ICA and the Conacaste preschool, contact:

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Partnership to improve vaccines for children

The United Nations has launched an ambitious campaign together with the private sector to develop improved or new vaccines to combat more effectively several childhood diseases worldwide. Bolstered by the success of the ongoing effort of global childhood immunization, the so-called Children's Vaccine Initiative aims to reduce mortality in children under five by one third by the year 2000 through the prevention of a wide spectrum of infectious diseases.

These diseases cause one billion illnesses among the world's children each year and place an enormous social and economic burden on countries, especially those in the developing world.

A broad consortium of public and private sector institutions and industries with an interest in vaccine development and production endorsed the initiative last December at the World Heath Organization (WHO) in Geneva, where the secretariat of the initiative is located.

The group represents the most ambitious grouping of public and private sector interests ever forged to tackle a global health issue, and includes over 100 representatives of United Nations organizations, public and private foundations and representatives of private industry and of bilateral aid programmes.

On the United Nations side the initiative is being organized in a partnership between WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank. The Rockefeller Foundation will be co-ordinating the research component.

UNICEF/T.S. Nagarajan

The Children's Vaccine Initiative *follows the success by WHO and UNICEF of providing immunization coverage to 80 per cent of the world's children against six major childhood diseases: poliomyelitis, measles, tuberculosis, diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus.*

The collaboration represents the most ambitious grouping of public and private sector interests ever forged to tackle a global health issue.

The collaboration with the private sector highlights the recognition that no single organization or industry possesses the resources, programmes or research capability to tackle such an enormous task. "We stand on the threshold of a historical turning point. Achieving the goals of the Children's Vaccine Initiative will not only bring enormous specific benefits in improving vaccines," explained Hiroshi Nakajima, director-general of WHO, "but it will establish a process of collaboration between the public and private sectors which will have far-reaching benefits in other areas as well."

The initiative aims to reduce the need for vaccines now requiring multiple injections. Possible alternatives include microencapsulation, involving injectable biodegradable "magic bullets" which slowly release the entrapped antigen in a way that mimics repeated, time-consuming and often painful injections. The first animal tests of such an approach were begun in 1991.

Another innovative approach would be live-vaccine carriers by which a live viral or bacterial vaccine can serve as a carrier on which a second vaccine can "ride". This may also eliminate the need to make multiple injections, thus simplifying the process, providing better and faster protection and saving lives.

Researchers also hope to develop a single-dose tetanus vaccine to improve coverage and eliminate neonatal tetanus, as well as a thermostable oral polio virus vaccine that will free it from the "cold chain" now required to keep the current fragile vaccines effective during transport. They also hope to produce a measles vaccine suitable for administration early in life.

Substantial progress is also being made in providing vaccines, where none previously existed, against dengue, hepatitis A and respiratory syncytial viruses.

"The architects of the Children's Vaccine Initiative have designed a plan that will enable the world community to accelerate and apply advances in science to development, manufacture and efficient delivery of new and better vaccines which will benefit children of all countries," said James Grant, executive director of UNICEF.

With the launching of the Children's Vaccine Initiative, the world's top international development agencies will combine forces with industry and national programme managers to tackle a daunting list of diseases caused by viral (such as measles, poliomyelitis, hepatitis A and E) and bacterial infections (including tetanus, meningococcal meningitis, bacterial diarrhoeal diseases, pneumococcal pneumonia and tuberculosis). In addition, the parasitic infection malaria causes about one million deaths annually, mainly in young children in Africa.

The Children's Vaccine Initiative represents a major new international goal, following the success of the Expanded Programme on Immunization, launched in the mid-1970s by WHO and UNICEF. This 150-country campaign has achieved 80 per cent child immunization coverage against six major childhood diseases: poliomyelitis, measles, tuberculosis, diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus.

Scientists agree generally that major advances can be made towards new or improved vaccines using existing and currently evolving scientific knowledge and capability. However, such new or improved vaccines can only be developed with the co-operation of industry, which can play a key role through investing in research and in their development and production.

Although large multinational companies are the major suppliers of vaccines for the global immunization programme currently under way, the magnitude of the financial resources required to develop an even wider spectrum of vaccines, and the risk and uncertainty of the potential market in developing countries, represent difficult hurdles for further private sector involvement. ■

Heartbeat - The rhythm of health World Health Day,

Health authorities in developing countries take small comfort in statistics showing in general that the prevalence of hypertension among their populations is relatively low in comparison to that of industrialized countries.

Instead, they worry, pointing to the total number of hypertensives in their populations, which is comparatively high, as a cause for alarm. What is most worrying of all, they say, is the fact that the small, but growing, affluent middle class is the group at highest risk.

"The increase in the prevalence of hypertension in many developing countries consistently parallels the increase in affluence," says Walinjon Muna, director of the General Hospital in Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon. "The attainment of middle class status ... is usually associated with dietary and lifestyle modifications that favour the increase of hypertension."

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is the commonest cardiovascular disease. It causes atherosclerosis, a narrowing of arteries that impedes the flow of blood, which is the pre-condition to a heart attack or stroke. These cardiovascular diseases kill 12 million people annually worldwide, more than any other single disease.

To sound an alarm against the increase of cardiovascular diseases, and particularly in developing countries, the World Health Organization has selected the slogan, "Heartbeat: the Rhythm of Health" upon which to focus on World Health Day, 7 April 1992. ■

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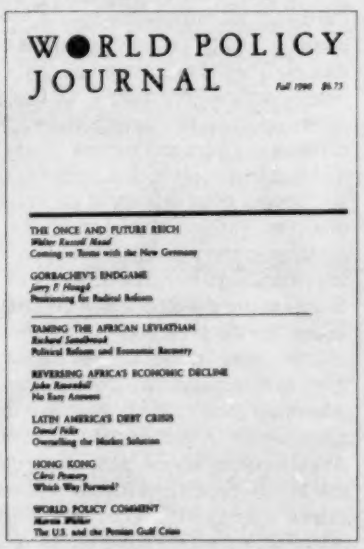

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Sustainability requires new economic concepts

By Winifred Armstrong

Many people now recognize that, for the first time in history, we are using up more of the earth's resources than the earth can regenerate. This unprecedented situation requires us to rethink how we organize production in order to find an equilibrium between what we use and existing resources.

Both capitalist and socialist models have been predicated on assumptions of continued growth. Both measure prosperity by growth, and growth by consumption. We now recognize that increasing the world's consumption of resources may soon result in less growth, less wealth and ultimately less consumption.

We have shown more capacity than will to bring environmental and social costs and benefits into our economic equations.

As I see it, we are moving, albeit too slowly, toward alternative concepts that will take us beyond existing economic models to increasingly emphasize development instead of growth, and integrate concepts of environment into development as well. The obsolescence and replacement that characterize current modes of production must shift to a system which provides incentives to reduce the resources required for production inputs and also the amount of waste generated. More goods can be designed to be repaired, recycled, reutilized—with a consequent reorganization of jobs as well as materials. Access to transportation, for example, may become more important than the number of cars per capita as both planning goal and prosperity measure.

The aim is an integrated system that will balance the use and the replenishment of resources. In mining or logging, for example, we can calculate the using up of a resource with the need to replace its value. When a production process causes environmental damage, we can estimate the cost and include it in the pricing of the product.

The theoreticians of capitalist and socialist economic frameworks did not anticipate these needs. But the alternative theory and tools to achieve these ends are well under way, the products of years of work and workshops drawing together diverse ideas and people. They are ready for application—at the Earth Summit, in commercial and non-profit projects, in how we all think about and go about our business.

If you don't count it . . .

A second arena for alternative conceptualizing deals with what economists do and don't count in the equations underlying policy formulation.

We economists don't count subsistence agriculture or informal economic activities. Yet in Africa, 50 to 90 per cent of people (depending on the country) gain most of their livelihood from what they grow and eat or make and barter. In countries as diverse as Peru and Italy, some 50 per cent or more of their people may be engaged in the informal sectors.

But if goods and services don't enter the cash economy, we economists don't count them. "And if you don't count it, it doesn't count," remarked one observer. It is increasingly clear that disregarding what half or more of people do to sustain themselves seriously skews economic policy.

Much current economic analysis does not count access to education or effects on health in the gain or loss to a project—these are called "externalities". We don't count the number of people engaged in the productive process as a goal—and so don't include it as an indicator. Thus when Ghana is proclaimed a success after undertaking eight years of the World Bank's structural adjustment programme (SAP), the fact that the majority of Ghanaians are living at a standard of living far lower than they were 15 years ago is not "counted" or even mentioned.

Policies based on economic models that leave out such key factors skew both economic reality and potential. In a number of African countries, for example, SAPs require people to replace the food they produce with imported food on the grounds that the imported food is cheaper. This policy, however, does not take into consideration what people eat from what they grow (that's subsistence), or what they barter for other goods and services (that's informal activity) or what the education and health services they can no longer afford may mean to their productive life (that's an externality).

The World Bank's SAPs now in effect in more than 20 African countries address many genuine problems. But the overall policy posits a limited model based on comparative advantage in a single global free market system—by which restricted criteria I believe most people in Africa (and many elsewhere) cannot succeed and many may not survive.

One World Bank official long experienced in African affairs commented ruefully that the majority of Africans in the countries which have adopted SAPs are getting poorer. The majority of Africans I talked with on a recent trip through 17 countries shared that observation—and yet most felt their countries could be viable, that is, under another framework could balance their production and consumption from their own resources with a sustainable lifestyle engaged in by their people.

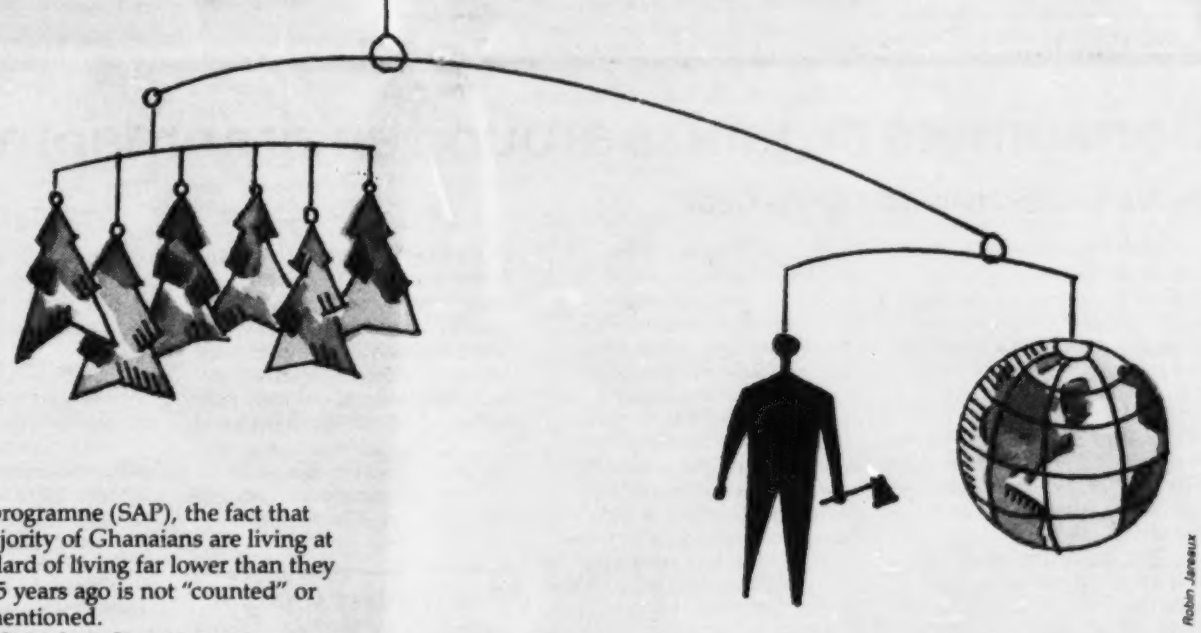
Prevailing models do not aim for or achieve sustainability by people. Multiple policies which encourage economic initiative and participation by all groups—subsistence, informal, local, communal, and not just the private, cash market sectors—may be more in order if sustainability by and for people is to become realized.

Changing the analytic framework?

To date we have shown more capacity than will to bring environmental and social costs and benefits into our economic policy equations.

Credible approaches to broaden the frame of reference of development are in the works. The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) *Human Development Report* is one such effort. The United Nations Statistical Office, in cooperation with other United Nations organizations, has over the past decade developed indicators of informal economic activities particularly as related to putting a value on women's work. The World Bank has developed an environmental accounting framework. None of these has yet to be effectively applied in practice, however.

Still, thousands of community, non-governmental and local government undertakings from New York to Nairobi work to improve survival and development possibilities for their participants in ways that go beyond our current models. It is only recently that these efforts are becoming linked to a wider intellectual and political framework.



Robin Jareaux

Are North and South sustainable?

As I see it, neither the North nor the South is sustainable under the present economic framework. Northern countries representing approximately 25 per cent of the world's people consume roughly 75 per cent of the world's production and are overrun with waste products which further damage the resource base from which future production must come. Yet the United States Congressional Budget Office reports that the standard of living for 80 per cent of Americans is lower than it was 10 years ago. Poverty seems increasingly widespread in Eastern Europe and other regions as well. Meanwhile, the 75 per cent of the world's people who are using 25 per cent of the world's production need to increase their share both relatively and absolutely.

Trying harder using current economic premises is clearly not working. Faced with the possibility of collective impoverishment—the earth's conjointly with our own—we are given both incentive and opportunity to think anew about how to organize our productive systems in ways that are sustainable.

Two of the areas in which to "move on" are suggested above: to shift from a notion of continuing linear growth to a system which limits resource consumption and reduces and recycles waste; and to include in our policy framework goals and measures which seek to increase the numbers of people engaged in all types of productive activities—not just the cash economy.

Decisions to organize projects, programmes and institutions in alternative ways do not need to wait for a mandate from elsewhere. We can begin wherever we are to set out sustainable objectives and apply the growing body of new concepts while contributing through application to evolving them. And we can assist and insist that the governmental and international bodies that represent us go beyond the current restrictive framework that so clearly no longer meets our needs. ■

Winifred Armstrong, an international economist and a principal organizer of The Other Economic Summit (TOES) in Houston '90 and Toronto '88, recently returned from a seven-month trip in East, West and Southern Africa. She is working on a book on Getting to An Economics that will Work for People: Something New Out of Africa, *and would welcome further thoughts on the points raised in this article from DF readers.*

Avoiding E-Mail: The excuses are running out

By Edward Rugumayo

"I must admit I have a phobia about computers," interjected one non-governmental organization (NGO) person, as our systems analyst began to describe the NGOnet (Africa) electronic mail project of the Environment Liaison Centre International (ELCI). It was not the first time this "barrier" to adding electronic mail (computer to computer transmission of messages known as "E-Mail" for short) to an existing means of communication was put up.

There are other reasons offered for not switching to this latest and most cost-effective means of communication. No computer, no telephone or no electricity are all valid reasons, although the latter has been overcome by one of our members in India who runs several computers on solar power. And the lack of telephones can be overcome by the use of packet radio.

"None of the people I want to communicate with have an E-Mail connection" is an equally valid argument advanced for staying with the traditional means of communication—person to person, voice telephone, post, telex and fax.

Even those of us at ELCI who are pressing for the broader use of E-Mail

Lisa Haney

acknowledge the possible dangers of this technology.

The negatives include its exclusiveness as, relatively speaking, fewer NGOs and community groups can acquire the hardware and technology; its potential for deepening the unequal access to information and for creating additional dependency as poorer NGOs turn to supporters for yet additional funding; possibilities for countries to divert meagre resources from improving communication systems (infrastructures for delivery) of normal mail upon which the majority poor depend; and other concerns over security implications for poor countries.

Still, excuses for avoiding the new technology are running out. It is pretty clear now that in the long term, the potential shortcomings are outweighed by the advantages.

The pluses are simple: convenience, cost-effectiveness and flexibility. Communication becomes immediate, consistent and retrievable. Even at the local organizational level, staff memos sent by E-Mail, for example, effectively eliminate the need for costly printing and manual distribution. Over time, availablity of documents on the computer also reduces paper waste and the need for filing. File cabinets may well become obsolete as offices rely more and more on electronic communication and storage.

It is perhaps because of the clear gains that increasingly, both in the South and although undoubtedly more so in the North, more and more NGOs are acquiring microcomputers. The reason is partly the decreasing price—and the increase in personal efficiency in word processing alone. And once the threshold from typewriter to micro has been crossed, E-Mail takes over from telex and fax as the most cost-effective way of sending and receiving information over long distances.

At ELCI headquarters in Nairobi, we have not put away our telex or fax and we still use voice telephone and normal and "speed" post. We continue to rely as much on the old tools of networking. But more and more staff are checking if it is possible to connect to correspondents by E-Mail in order to maximize our limited communications budget.

We are among the first to admit that the challenge to large, networking NGOs such as ELCI is to link the electronic systems of communication with the print media—in our case through our newsletter *Ecoforum*—so that what we receive within minutes can quickly be shared with those not able to communicate in this way. It will always be necessary to ensure that the right of access to information is not curtailed as more and more global debates and meetings move to the airwaves.

This need has been particularly true in East Africa where our secretariat is based and where we have gained some experience in installing and testing communications equipment and software and in training end-users and computer operators, first through the WEDNET and then the NGOnet (Africa) projects. Increasingly we are using it to prepare for the June Earth Summit, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in Brazil.

The December edition of *Ecoforum* contains several articles about communications technology as it relates to non-governmental organizations. To subscribe to this newsletter, published bimonthly in English, French, Spanish and Arabic, write to Environment Liaison Centre International, P.O. Box 72461, Nairobi, Kenya.

Consumers organize around environmental issues

By Martin Abraham and Kevin Cook

World Consumer Rights Day, observed every year on 15 March, provides a platform for the consumer movement to publicize its views and concerns through the local initiatives of groups worldwide. "CHOOSE FOR A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT" is the theme selected by the International Organization of Consumers' Unions for World Consumer Rights Day 1992.

The following essay outlines some of the work and responsibilities that consumer organizations face during the decade.

Most consumer organizations have been established in industrialised countries so that consumers can benefit from the otherwise bewildering variety of goods and services of a generally affluent society; in the developing countries consumer organizations are being formed primarily so their members can participate in the task of securing a decent level of living. Both groups share the goal of the overall improvement in the quality of living.

In the South, however, many consumer organizations have stressed the link between environmental deterioration and the consumerist attitudes of Northern societies. They are also critical—and rightly so—of the net flow of raw materials from developing countries to the North.

Many of our most serious environmental concerns—problems such as global warming, acid rain and deforestation—are a direct consequence of efforts by nations, both North and South, to achieve rapid gains in their GNP (gross national product). The "blind pursuit" of short-term gains in GNP have led many nations to deplete seriously the environmental resources which are vital for long-term development and sustainability of the planet. Yet these consequences are still overlooked by policy-makers who mistakenly assume that increasing GNP should always be their first priority.

On the other hand, for the many countries in the South that are trapped in the vicious circle of debt and debt repayment, increased production at the expense of the environment can seem to be the only way out of their economic crises. Global solutions must be found to this very critical problem, which cannot be fully dealt with by national governments.

Environmental problems ignored

Having said that, the consensus among consumer organizations today is that environmental problems are being inadequately tackled or even ignored by governments.

The fact that the current "green consumerism" trend is occurring almost exclusively in Northern countries is hardly surprising when considering that so many consumers in the South do not have the luxury of making choices when buying products—if they can afford to purchase them at all.

There can even be a potential conflict between "green consumerism" and the traditional role of the consumer organization to secure the best deal for the consumer. Consumer demand, along with world poverty, as well as government and business failure to use energy-saving and energy conservation measures, has caused environmental degradation.

The greatest strength consumer organizations have in the sphere of environmental advocacy is their ability to communicate directly and forcefully with large numbers of ordinary people.

But consumer organizations have never regarded their role as one of defending people's right to consume regardless of the consequences. On the contrary, they have the real role of informing and educating the concerned consumer, rather than fuelling an excessive demand for new goods.

Consumer organizations should also lead and influence consumer opinion.

Many consumer groups put pressure on industry and governments for knowingly damaging the environment.

Consumer organizations in the North and South can play a strong role in environmental preservation efforts through a range of activities that utilize their special skills, resources and positions in societies. Most can be divided into three key areas.

Educate and reform

If consumers are to be persuaded to work towards a less polluted environment, they need specific information and advice based on knowledge of the benefits and consequences of using goods and services. Consumer organizations know—or can find out—how pollution affects consumers. They also know or can find out how consumers, using various products, cause pollution, for example.

Consumer organizations can test consumer goods and survey consumer opinion. Although they lack the massive resources needed to develop substitute products or change industrial processes, consumer groups are quite capable of investigating and reporting on many specific problems of pollution relating to products or services. Consumer groups can investigate the degree of truth in environmental claims made by manufacturers or use their expertise in testing and surveys.

Consumer organizations can act as effective pressure groups on environmental matters. The ability of consumer organizations to influence and persuade, goes beyond the possession of technical expertise and facilities. It is primarily rooted in the credibility and trust extended to consumer organizations and their members, and also by the even larger public which closely follows press and broadcast reports of their activities and publications. In being able to communicate directly and forcefully with large numbers of ordinary people, consumer organizations have perhaps their greatest single strength in the sphere of environmental advocacy.

To obtain consumer kits or for more information about IOCU, write to one of its offices:

Regional Office for Europe and North America (IOCU-ROENA), Emmastraat 9, 2595 EG, The Hague, Netherlands.

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (IOCU-ROAP), P.O. Box 1045, 10830 Penang, Malaysia.

Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (IOCU-ROLAC), Casilla 10993, Suc.2, Montevideo, Uruguay.

Resources

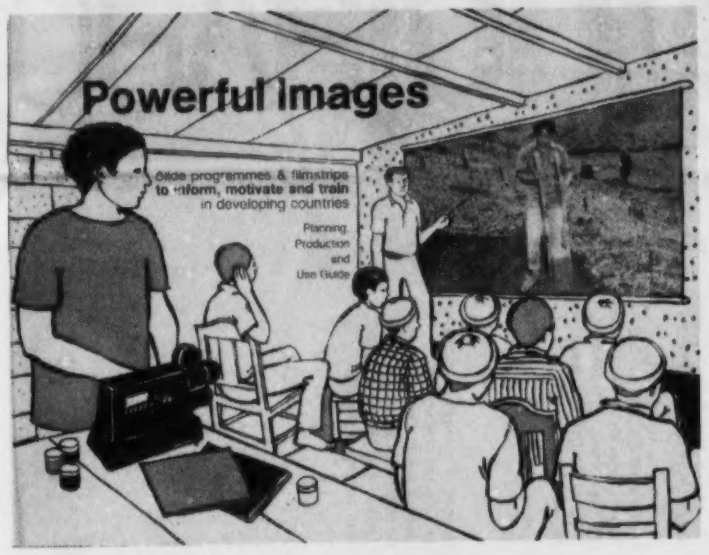
Finance

The World Bank and Cooperation with NGOs.
Ann Thomson.
Canadian Organization for Development through Education (CODE), National Office, 321 Chapel St., Ottawa, ON KIN 7Z2. $20.00.

Thomson offers a concise and highly informative description of how the World Bank operates and how NGOs might increase their involvement in its operations, especially since the bank already has considerable influence on the development policies of member nations, policies which directly affect the NGO community. She notes that NGOs have already had considerable success influencing the bank on policies concerning the alleviation of poverty, adding that NGOs had "a marked influence" on the tone and content of the bank's *1990 World Development Report on Poverty*.

Communication

Three booklets have been published by the Development Support Communication Branch of the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Information Division. They deal with communication for rural development.



Powerful Images. An attempt to explain why filmstrips and slide sets improve many activities ranging from the training of technical staff to building people's participation in rural development programmes. Different types of programmes and production techniques are described, as well as how to use audiovisual materials to improve extension and training activities. Of interest to national managers who need ideas for building national self-reliance in this kind of audiovisual production.

Available in English, French and Spanish.

Communication for Rural Development: To Improve Planning, Participation and Training. An introduction to communication for rural development—how communication methods and technology can be used to mobilize people for development action, to promote better linkages and co-ordination, and to improve the reach and impact of training and extension.

Available in English, French and Spanish.

Guidelines on Communication for Rural Development: A Brief for Development Planners and Project Formulators. An overview of the role of communication in rural development, providing a description of the conceptual aspects of development communication and the problems that can be alleviated by a well-conceived and executed communication programme. Includes a checklist for planning communication activities and a brief description of the advantages and disadvantages of using different media.

Available in English, French and Spanish.

Development Support Communication Branch, Information Division, Food and Agriculture Organization, Via delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy.

Appropriate technology

AT Source.

This quarterly magazine publishes articles in the field of technology and development in support of local organizations in the South.

Some of the published articles include a mini-special on bicycles for transport purposes, construction of earth roads by rural communities, the usefulness of information and control systems for small-scale enterprises, housing projects for the poor, experiences with solar boilers, and improving small-scale poultry production.

The magazine is available in English and French. Subscription fee, for Southern readers: Dfl.45 ($25.00) for two years; for Northern readers: Dfl.40 ($22.50) for one year.

AT Source, P.O. Box 41, 6700 AA Wageningen, The Netherlands.

Environment

The Directory of National Environmental Organizations, Fourth Edition.
US Environmental Directories, P.O. Box 65156, St. Paul, MN 55165. $54.00.

The directory lists addresses and descriptions of over 500 non-governmental environmental and conservation organizations. Most of the organizations are national in scope. A few are regional but have national significance, and others are international.

It includes a subject index with over 40 major environmental subject areas.

UNESCO/A.G. Fullerton

Women of Buéa, Cameroon, *gather at an exhibition of fabric tie-dveing.*

Development

DDS, A Strategy for Human Development in African Communities is the first publication of monographs by the Regional Office of the Africa DDS Programme of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV).

DDS—which stands for domestic development service—got started in 1984, with financing from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to enable African communities to develop self-help based on local knowledge and experiences, local expertise and creativity, and to learn enough organizational and managerial skills to take charge of their own integrated community development.

The publication describes workshops, a training module for these workshops (developed in Zambia), a case study of experiences in the village of Modji-Gangan, Benin, and an evaluation report of the UNDP/UNV's DDS project in Zambia.

Another publication, available in English and French, is the **Africa DDS Newsletter** on community development experiences and on activities and results of the DDS programme in Africa.

Both publications are available free of charge from the Regional Office of Africa DDS Programme, Box 4775, Harare, Zimbabwe.

Calendar

Eighth North-South Media Meeting.
6-9 April 1992, Geneva.

Two special events will highlight this eighth North-South Media Meeting (NSMM): the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' journey to the Americas and the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

Regarding the anniversary, the meeting will not "celebrate a conquest" but try to understand the impact of this "colonization" on civilizations. Also to be addressed in this regard is the importance of migratory movements, a major problem of our century.

Regarding UNCED, the role of the media in efforts to save the earth will be analyzed.

As in past NSMMs, there will be an international competition of television programmes concerning development issues, showings of productions by independents and institutions, audio-visual stands, and exhibitions.

For more information, write to Tina Boillat, Co-ordinator, North-South Media Meeting, c/o Télévision suisse romande, 20, quai Ernest-Ansermet, 1205 Geneva, Switzerland.

Health

1991 Supplement to the List of Free Materials in Family Planning/Maternal and Child Health.

This supplement was compiled by the Program for International Training in Health (INTRAH) for distribution to training and service organizations in developing countries and to international agencies for the purpose of sharing useful ideas, outstanding training or reference materials, and relevant information on a variety of subjects with trainers, managers and field workers.

The materials in this supplement are either available free of charge, or free only to persons working in developing countries. In some cases there is a limit on the number of copies that may be requested.

To obtain materials, write directly to the agency identified at the end of each material's description. INTRAH does not distribute the materials in the list.

For inclusion of information about other free materials, write to:

Catherine Murphy, Training Materials Officer, INTRAH, 208 N. Columbia St., Chapel Hill, NC 27514, **United States.**

Pauline Muhuhu, Director, INTRAH/Anglophone, P.O. Box 55699, Nairobi, **Kenya.**

Pape Gaye, Directeur, INTRAH/Francophone, B.P. 12357, Lomé, **Togo.**

Human settlements

World Habitat Awards 1992. Call for entries.

Entries for the World Habitat Awards are currently being sought for 1992. This is the eighth annual competition, which has been highly successful in attracting outstanding human settlements projects. The winning projects have received worldwide publicity, with the aim of encouraging their replication in many different countries.

Projects are sought in both developed and developing countries, which offer sustainable futures to residents and which provide practical and imaginative solutions to current housing problems.

The two awards given annually will both be valued at £10,000.

The deadline for entry submissions is 31 July 1992.

For more information, write to Diane Diacon, Research Officer, Building and Social Housing Foundation, Memorial Square, Coalville, Leicestershire LE6 4EU, United Kingdom.

A Global Health Partnership

"A Global Partnership: Improving the Health of Underserved Populations" will bring approximately 1,000 public health and medical professionals from across the United States and abroad to Washington, D.C., from 14 to 17 June 1992.

It will be the nineteenth Annual International Health Conference of the National Council for International Health (NCIH), a 21-year-old non-profit information and advocacy organization dedicated to improving world health.

"The United States can learn valuable lessons from the developing world on how to deliver health care, especially under the constraints of limited funding and resources," said Russell Morgan, Jr., president of NCIH. He cited examples such as prenatal care, immunization campaigns and adolescent pregnancy prevention, services that are needed but not always available at all levels of society.

The conference themes will cover global health problems (infant mortality, immunizations, AIDS/STDs, family planning, substance abuse, environmental health, etc.), approaches to solving health problems, special targeted populations, institutional responses, and country experiences.

Experts from more than 70 countries worldwide are expected to participate in the conference. The World Health Organization, the Pan American Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund are also expected to participate. These agencies funded and participated in earlier regional conferences.

For information regarding registration, contact the NCIH Conference Department, 1701 K Street N.W., Suite 600, Washington, DC. 20006, United States. Tel (202) 833-5903; Fax (202) 833-0075.

As I assume my duties, I am well aware that our Organization faces the need for fundamental readjustments in response to a world in constant transformation. We must strive for the attainment of international development in all its aspects. It is my intention to address this issue with vigour in order to contribute to finding ways and means to narrow the gap between the rich North and the poor South. Tackling the crippling problem of international debt is central to achieving a healthy world economy. Equally important, issues of environment and sustainable development must be seriously addressed, so as to stop any further deterioration of our planet.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali
in accepting his appointment as new secretary-general of the United Nations for a five-year term beginning 1 January 1992.

development forum

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ITU
International Telecommunication Union;
WMO
World Meteorological Organization;
IMO
International Maritime Organization;
WIPO
World Intellectual Property Organization;
IFAD
International Fund for Agricultural Development;
UNIDO
United Nations Industrial Development Organization;
IAEA
International Atomic Energy Agency;
GATT
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